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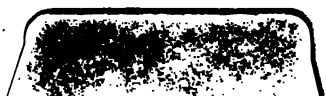
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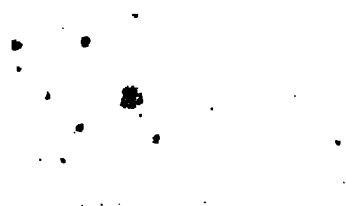
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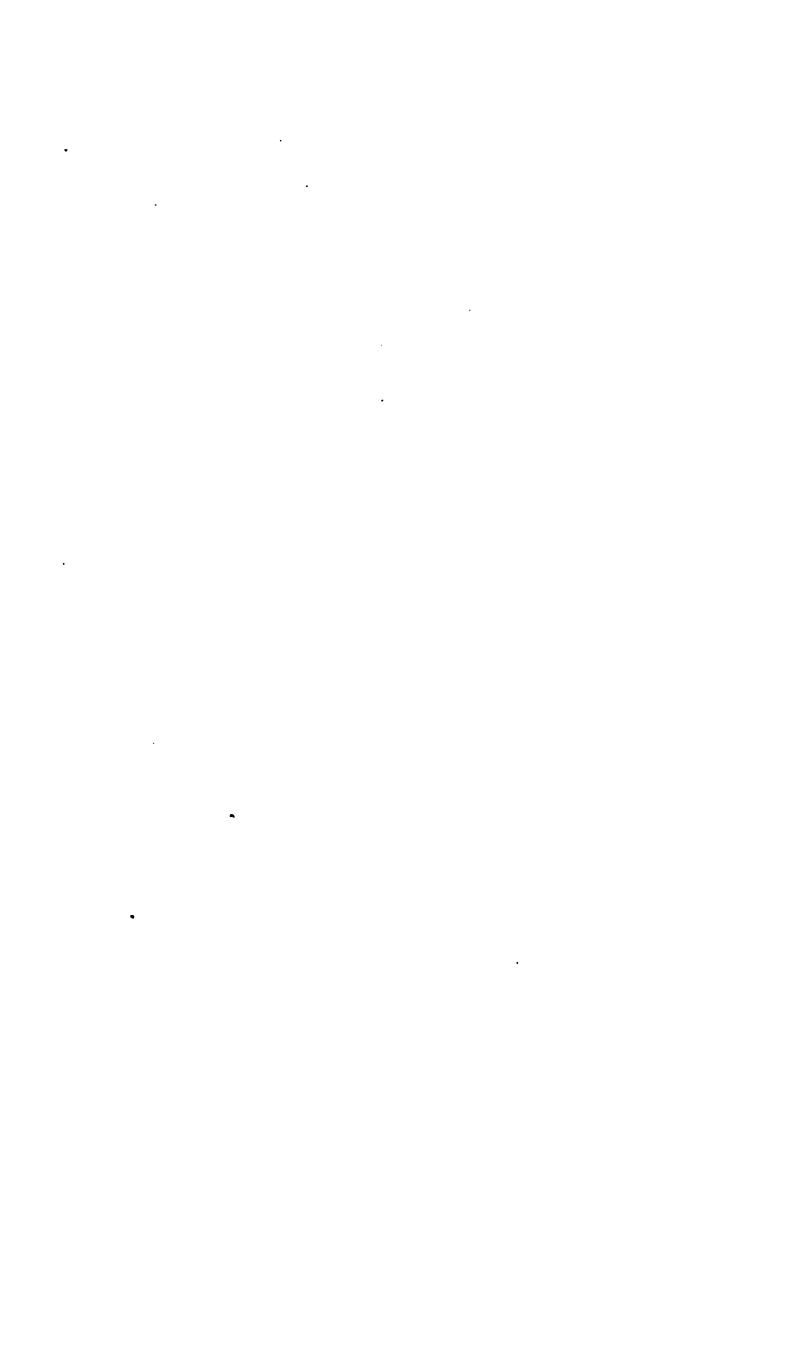












**TRACTS**

**FOR THE**

**CHRISTIAN SEASONS.**



TRACTS

FOR THE

CHRISTIAN SEASONS.

---

VOL. I.

*SECOND SERIES.*

ADVENT TO THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

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OXFORD,

JOHN HENRY PARKER;

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# Tracts for the Christian Seasons.

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## INTRODUCTORY TRACT.

### *Thoughts on Godly progress.*

It cannot yet be said of the Church of Christ that “her warfare is accomplished.” No; it is lengthened out; the war goes on; the fight lasts; we have closed one year of trial, and now another comes; another draws upon us; whether we shall see its end, we know not; but we are at the day-break of another Christian year. In the distance we see another Christmas, another Epiphany, another Lent, another Easter, another Whitsuntide drawing on; the same circle of Godly Seasons is on the move; the same course of Holy Services is about to be begun; we shall soon be using the prayers, hearing the Gospels and the Lessons we used and heard last year; we shall soon be in the midst of our Christmas joy and Christmas privileges, when the Church will speak to us in the same words, and set before us the same blessed truths. We are about to tread the same round;

## INTRODUCTORY TRACT.

it will all seem outwardly to be the same year over again; the wheels of the Church do not carry us to new scenes, new truths, new doctrines; we keep to "the old paths," and the old ways; we again turn over the same leaves of our old Prayer-book; and the moment we have ended the season of Trinity, we again begin with Advent, just as we did last year, just as we did the year before, just as we did many years ago; yea, as our fathers did in their time of old.

And yet while we are about to have the same Holy Seasons, the same pious services, the same prayers, the same Gospels, the same Lessons from Holy Scripture, the same blessed Feasts, the same solemn Fasts, are *we* to be the same? Are *we* to be just as we were last year, or the year before? Are we to run over these old paths in the same spirit? Are we to be what we were, unchanged, older but not different?

Nay, let all else be the same; welcome holy Advent, welcome Christmas, with all thy old prayers and psalms and creeds, welcome Epiphany and Easter, welcome all again! but let *us* be different; let us use these seasons differently; let us walk with a holier mind, a better spirit, a truer penitence, a livelier faith and hope, a warmer love, a more *fixed and steady* as well as brighter flame of

## INTRODUCTORY TRACT.

prayer through these same stages of the Christian year. While the journey seems the same, with the same views, the same prospects, let us journey with a more thankful, watchful, faithful mind, improved and improving in all fruits of the Spirit: God forbid that we should be the same. Are we not nearer death, nearer judgment, nearer Christ's second coming? Are we to go on learning Christ, without knowing Him a whit the more? Are we to have more time, more grace, more privileges, and yet to be at a stand still, as stunted trees that will not grow?

Higher and higher still should we ascend as our time runs on; no standing still is there for Christ's true soldiers, no drowsing on our march, no dull drowsy movement of the feet; higher be your heart, higher be your motives, higher be your aim; yea, be purer, be holier, be humbler, be meeker, be more loving, more self-denying, more generous, more unworldly, more fond of heavenly things. Let Advent be the same, and yet different; let Christmas be the same, and yet different; think of Christ's second coming, but be more prepared; think of Christ's birth as Son of man, but discern and understand more clearly His marvellous love witnessed in His marvellous humility; *think of His death and suffering, but*

## INTRODUCTORY TRACT.

feel with sharper anguish and keener shame, the weight, the terrible and crushing burden, of those sins which brought Him to the bitter cross ; think of His resurrection, but with truer faith meditate on His mysterious mighty victory over death and hell, and the great day of the universal resurrection ; think of His ascension, but let your hearts and minds ascend with a bolder and more loving flight toward the heavenly place into which our Saviour passed ; think of the coming of the Holy Ghost, but more truly desire His constant presence, more earnestly seek for it in more earnest prayer, more earnest reception of the blessed Sacrament of Christ's body and blood, more earnest use of all means of grace in the Church of Christ, more earnest obedience to all motions of the Spirit, even to the least and faintest voice, which the more attentive and practised ear may be able to catch.

Many things there are we can begin to do ; those things which we have already done we can do in a better way. There must be growth or else decay ; there must be the rising of the waters or the fall ; there must be the increase and strengthening of the body, or the decrease and the decline thereof ; this is God's law : we cannot *continue in one stay* ; we cannot remain the same ;

## INTRODUCTORY TRACT.

not to advance is to go back: if we are now where we were last year, we are worse than we were last year; there must be godly progress, godly growth, godly advancement; else we go back, we slide and slip away from the true standard of the Gospel of Christ, we fade and wither, and get farther and farther from the life-giving Sun of righteousness. Think of this, all ye who settle yourselves, as ye think, in the same place, who have no fixed purpose to do other or better than you have done, who are not aiming at higher things, who keep to your accustomed ways, who think you will do well enough at your present point, and who are not lifting up your hearts to a more decided service of Christ your Saviour. We cannot travel on a flat line; we must all be ascending or descending, going down or going up, getting better or getting worse, nearer heaven or nearer hell.

Think not, then, to stand still; that cannot be. The child at school does not continue at the same point; something fresh is learned; something is added to the stock of knowledge; or something is known less perfectly, or perhaps forgotten altogether. Should not Christ's soldiers be adding to their store? Are we never to get on, never to advance, *never to add to our knowledge?* Is



#### INTRODUCTORY TRACT.

more time to be given us, more opportunities of grace, without any increase of heavenly wisdom, or of the fruits of faith? Are we never to expand and grow into a fuller stature of faith? Surely there is much to be learnt that we know not; much to be learnt more perfectly that we only partly know; much to be unlearned that we have acquired to our hurt.

Why is our life in the world thus lengthened? Is it for nought? Are we to have more time and no more growth, to increase in years but not in godliness, to have this last year added to us, but to be at the end of it where we were at the beginning? Can this be the use of length of life? Surely not. As time abounds, so should we abound more and more in all that belongs to godliness; all our worship, all our prayers, all our repentances, all our thanksgivings, all our alms, all our self-denials, should be improved in some respect. Since our Lord increased in wisdom and stature as His earthly life ran on, so should we increase in spiritual height and strength; the whole man should ripen in spiritual things, reaching forth and rising towards the perfect man, with truer joy in the Holy Ghost, deeper sense of God's mercy in Christ, higher *views of the holiness and purity required of the*

#### INTRODUCTORY TRACT.

members of Christ's Church, greater relish for heavenly things, stronger hatred of sin, and more abiding self-command.

Thus it should be. This Advent should be our best Advent so far ; this Christmas our best Christmas so far ; there should be more of God, less of the world ; more of the Spirit of God, less of the prince of this world in us ; from strength to strength should we proceed, as fresh gifts are bestowed upon us. Increase of days demands corresponding increase of faith and hope and love ; the brook should become a river, and the river a sea ; " first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear ; " thus should time bring fruit ; as we say of trees, we should " make wood." In worldly things men look to advance as time goes on ; the workman who began with clumsily managing his tools, gets handy by use and exercise ; the longer he plies his trade, the greater his skill becomes, the less his failures ; what he could not do last year, he is able to do this ; or what he did with difficulty last year, he does with ease now ; his hand has acquired strength or niceness of touch, his eye quickness and keenness ; even so, though we repeat the same prayers, keep the same seasons, go through *the same holy services*, profess the same

#### INTRODUCTORY TRACT.

faith, we should do all more thoughtfully, more holily, with a more practised spirit. This is the very use of more time, that we should grow more fruit; we might as well have died a year ago, if we were not designed by this time to know more of God and of the blessed truths and mysteries of the gospel of Christ.

Have you not seen the sun rise, with thick veils of mists dimming its golden eye and hanging over the hazy fields; then these gray vapours have got thinner and thinner still, and streaks of soft light have streamed through, till at last the sun gathering strength has scattered away the mist and rent the veils, rising in the heavens into the fulness of his might, putting forth all his mid-day glory, and making all things bright and golden by his looks. In like manner the child of God in whom is the light of Christ, is at first shrouded over with mists of ignorance and fear and natural love of the world; and then as his strength grows, these vapours of the world vanish, and he rises in clearness of soul, conquering the mists and dews that would hide his spiritual beauty, getting stronger and stronger still as his day advances, shining as a light in the world with brighter and brighter rays. This *should be our aim*, to continue brightening, to

## INTRODUCTORY TRACT.

continue rising above the world, as we certainly draw nearer to the presence of God. He who has given alms should give more bountifully or with better heart; he who has prayed little should now pray much; he who has not received the blessed Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, should begin to receive it; he who has received it, should partake of it more worthily; he who has had some victories over the spirit of the world, should strive for greater conquests and aim his arrow at higher marks.

Onwards, onwards, must ye advance, soldiers and sons of God! farther and farther must ye flee from the world; higher and higher must ye mount the holy hill of the Lord. See the increasing responsibilities of increasing years. The same truths may meet your eye, but they should be taking deeper root, putting forth larger branches, and growing richer fruit. The seasons look the same; this dawn of another Christian year looks like the dawn of all former years; but we are nearer the day of Christ's coming; the distance lessens. The clock goes round at one hour as evenly, as vigorously, as at another; round and round the hands travel in their course, and then suddenly, without warning, without sign of weakness, they *stop*. *So this Advent looks like last*

#### INTRODUCTORY TRACT.

Advent ; the world looks no nearer its end ; all things are much the same as they were ; yet the seasons will suddenly stop ere long. We must therefore make progress, since time makes progress ; our warfare will soon end, whether in victory or defeat ; the appointed time draws near, the day closes in, the light fades ; though we are beginning another year, we may call it “the beginning of the end ;” time is really getting shorter, the world older, all things hastening to decay. While the world is coming to its end, we should be rising to our prime ; while all things hasten to decay, we should grow and put forth stronger life. On then, I say, to higher things ; be not content with your present spiritual state ; abide not where you are ; at once make up your mind to seek after improvement ; at once see that it is your work to improve ; enter this new year with strong resolves to become more devoted to your Lord ; see the need of godly progress. Set forth as a good workman in the morning of a working day ; take up your tools with a good heart ; nerve your heart for your toils, prepare yourself for toil ; see that work is before you, and whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might ; “improve each shining hour ;” *get on from one part of the field to another ; cast*

#### INTRODUCTORY TRACT.

off all idle thoughts ; no more day-dreams now ;  
no more basking in the sun ; no more sitting  
under the shade of trees ; no more sitting down  
to eat and drink and rising up to play ; up and  
be doing ; the Lord calls ; the Spirit calls ; the  
Church calls ; “ he that hath ears to hear, let him  
hear.”

## DEVOTION.

ALMIGHTY and most merciful Father, who hast given us grace in times past, and dost mercifully prolong our days on the earth ; grant that we may continue to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Thy dear Son. Lead us forward by Thy Spirit from strength to strength, that we may more perfectly serve Thee, and attain unto a more lively hope of Thy mercy in Christ Jesus. Quicken our dull hearts ; inspire us with warmer affections for Thee, O God, and for Thy heavenly truth. Stir up the gift that is in us, and pour down from above more abundant gifts of grace, that we may make progress in heavenly things. Increase our faith as Thou dost increase our years ; and the longer we are suffered to abide in Thy Church on earth, the better may our service be, the more willing our obedience, the more consistent our daily lives, the more complete our devotion to Thee. Grant this our prayer, O gracious Father, which we humbly offer at the throne of grace in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.

## facts for the Christian Seasons.

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### FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

#### *The Day of Christ.*

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PROPER LESSONS: *Morning*, Isaiah i. ; *Evening*, Isaiah ii.

EPISTLE, Rom. xiii. 8. GOSPEL, St. Mat. xxi. 1.

---

It is still in our power to speak of the coming Christ. However near His day may be, He is not yet taken His seat, nor gathered all men, quick and dead, great and small, before His throne. However soon the decree may go forth concerning the end of the world, our ears are not yet startled by the trumpet of the archangel or the voice of God. Christ's coming is still a future thing. At this moment we ourselves are in the land of the living, and the dead are sleeping in their graves ; the dead and the living have not yet met ; the veil is between the two, the great mysterious gulf ; one portion of mankind is here, another is beyond ; and the day when all shall meet is among future days. So far all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. We are able to see all the accustomed sights of the world ; and we are not called to



gaze on the face of God, on the throne of God, on the holy angels, on the dead raised from their graves, on the many mysteries of the world beyond. The works of the world are not burned up ; cities, palaces, churches, worldly riches, merchandise, silver and gold, fine apparel, chariots, implements of war, works of learning, books of scholars, beauties of art, pleasant pictures, all the wares of the world, are not given up to the fires of the last day. The world holds on her course among the other stars ; the wheels of her chariot go round as of old ; it is not all over ; the end is not yet ; heaven and hell have not received their companies ; good and evil grow together till the harvest ; though thousands have finished their day of trial, the trial of others is going on ; the end is not yet.

Though it is true there are signs of the end, and these signs thickening amongst us of late, such as distress of nations, perplexity, rumours of war, pestilence, the throes and struggles of a disordered and unquiet world ; yet we must not dare to prophesy. The air may clear ; these thunder-clouds, that seem to our short-sighted souls to betoken the instant coming of the Lord, may pass. We are apt to exaggerate present *troubles*, as though they were the worst of all

#### FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

and there had never been the like before ; but at the same time, while we must not say the Lord *will* come on such a day or in such a year, we must not say He will *not* come at such a time. God knows the time, and it is in His own hand. If instead of prophesying we should hasten to *act* as though He were close at hand, we take the wise and the good part. *Act* as if the Judgment were near, and we shall be great gainers though the Judgment be far off ; we need no prophet to tell us this, that the death of the youngest of us is near at hand ; and as regards salvation or perdition, death is the end of the world ; the battle is lost or won ; and though the sentence is not pronounced, it is settled ; the links of evidence are complete, whatever way they turn ; after death we can add no good to that which is written concerning us, we can take away no evil.

Now when we think of the effect on all of us of our Saviour's coming, when we seriously consider the final change we shall all undergo at that day, and when we consider in good earnest our present spiritual state with all its imperfections, we owe God thanks for the pause which our Lord makes. There are so many *inconsistencies, short-comings, dry and barren*

## FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

intervals, in the lives even of those who walk under the cross, that we may well wish some short reprieve. To say we are "ready" for the end of the world or for death, is what few can say without presumption, or ignorance of the thing they speak of. It is an awful thing to die even under the best circumstances; and the day of Christ is called by the Spirit, "the great and terrible day of the Lord." It is good for us that our final sentence is not fixed, that we have a little time for doing good works and proving the genuine nature of our faith. There are but few that can truly or wisely pray the Lord to hasten His kingdom; most of us may let such a prayer alone; it belongs to the mature disciple. We have work to do before we are fit to meet our Lord.

Some indeed may long for the morning of the resurrection; they may wish for day, like St. Paul and his voyagers; the souls under the altar may cry "Lord, how long;" the departed saints may desire their "perfect consummation and bliss," from which the continuance of the world still keeps them; they may be longing to see the world pass that they may enter in the fulness of their joy, that they may be lifted up *from paradise* to the higher regions of heaven,

#### FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

that they may be glorified both in soul and body, and united with the brethren whom they have left behind them in the world.

Some too of the living, such as great sufferers, whose earthly course has been clouded over with great griefs, and whose life runs heavily like Pharaoh's chariots, may take up the words of St. John; and exclaim, "Come, Lord Jesus;" they may say with David, "make no long tarrying, O my God." Such may desire, like the Apostle, "to depart and be with Christ, which is far better," to reach the haven where they would be, to have passed the waves of this troublesome world. Though even sufferers must take heed not to yield to impatient thoughts; to be out of pain, to shake off trouble, is not of necessity to be achieved by passing out of the world; let patience have her perfect work; the afflicted must not be in too much haste to break the yoke.

But as concerns the greater part of mankind, can we wish the world to be at an end, and the warfare of the Church to cease? Could we welcome the trump of God, as if it were the voice of one about to set prisoners free? With most of us it is a matter of thankfulness that the Lord *delayeth His coming*; while we should take

## FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

every onward step anxiously and with trembling, with awe and watchfulness, it is something to have a remnant of the day of salvation, of that which is called "the accepted time." Time is grace; there is nothing unchangeable now; we may be changed towards God; God may be changed towards us; we may regain Christ's favour, if we have erred in days past; God may give the worst of us His Spirit to soften and turn our souls. In short, we are as yet tarrying within reach of salvation, within the borders of hope. The very power of still going to the house of prayer, where God is, is of itself great grace; it shews us that it is not yet too late to repent and turn to God; we may have done works of darkness, but light is there; there is the pardoning God; there the mercy-seat; there the throne of grace; there the Saviour. We are there brought together, ourselves and God; devils may range abroad; dark thoughts may trouble us; but still the power of throwing ourselves on our knees and confessing our sins is a most merciful gift of grace. We may yet be saved; justice lingers that mercy may step in; the last doom has not passed the lips of our Judge.

*But what if the judgment had now been*

#### FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

amongst past things, if the resurrection had taken place, if the blast of the trumpet had long since been heard, if there were none other places now but heaven and hell ; how many of us would be suffering torment who are now at ease ! The door of hell might have been closed behind us ; the everlasting doors, not of glory, but of the place of terror, barred ; and we cast in, without power to return, without hope, without any “year of release.” Many whose pulse beats evenly at this time, whose whole frame is full of health, who have no torment in their flesh, nor agony of mind, would be now pierced through with sorrows endless and intolerable, if the trial of their souls had ended a year ago, and the world had passed away ; they would have been, not as they are now, prisoners of hope in a world where hope is ; not as they are now, able to go to the house of prayer where God is, nor in the heavenly places of the Church where angels are and good men, but in the place of devils according to the sentence of final condemnation.

While we are now within the reach of grace, able to cry “Abba, Father,” dwelling still in the presence of God, within the guardianship of *angels, and the sound of Gospel promises, and*

## FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

the reach of Gospel gifts, and the call of the ambassadors of Christ, shall we not with profound thankfulness think over all the privileges yet enjoyed, all the mercies in our hands to-day, all the terrors we might have been going through, had the holy Jesus been quicker in His approach? This most merciful tarrying of Christ is not lightly to be esteemed. For the sake of the careless and the sinner, for the sake of the pleasure-seekers and wanderers who think not on Christ's day, the few who might wish the days to be shortened may well think gladly on the patience of God. Though for themselves they might desire the light of that day to break, yet with the Apostle they may feel themselves in "a strait betwixt two," as they consider what is needful for multitudes of their brethren. Looking out upon the mass of iniquity, carelessness, forgetfulness of Christ, they may well desire to put off their own day of joy a little while, and pray God to give the Ninevehs of this age space for repentance.

There are souls which may even now wake up, and casting off their works of darkness "put on the armour of light;" by these very delays of Christ the evil one may be disappointed of prey *which would otherwise have fallen into his hands.*

#### FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

For while time is itself grace, there are other ways of grace that remain open to us through this gift of time. Thus we still hear the threatenings of His Holy Word, and threats are mercies ; they are calls to repentance and arguments for it. When God says, "if the ungodly will not turn, He will whet His sword ; He hath bent His bow and made it ready ;" is not this assertion of the little lingering of the arm of wrath a most gracious warning to the sinner to flee from the wrath to come, that the sword may not fall upon an impenitent soul ? The chastisements and threats and angers that go before the act of disinheriting a son, may stop the act of cutting off : if we will not turn, then comes the storm ; but what if we hear the entreaty, " why will ye die ?" what if we do turn and repent ? Then indeed the gift of time, by enabling us once more to hear the threatenings of our Saviour, has kept open the way of return ; then on our true penitence promptly performed, ere the arrows of God fly from the bow, the bow will be unbent, the string slackened, the arrow returned to the quiver, and the sword sheathed. Blessed are the sternest words of Christ to those that yet stand in the militant Church ; for by stern words in this day of salvation *we may escape* those terrible words



#### FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

in the day of judgment, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." He threatens who has some love left; whereas He ceases to threaten who has ceased to love.

We then, even the worst of us, should bless God that the end is not yet; and the best may also bless God for the sake of the worst. The Lord delayeth His coming; and His delay is designed to further the work of His love. He threatens the ungodly, while He delays, that they may repent. This very Season is as it were a prophet among us, repeating to us the prophecies of old, bidding us look forward to the second coming of our Lord, and urging us to instant penitence lest we should be found asleep. Much of life has gone; who can say what remains? all is doubt before us, all mist, all uncertainty; behind us are many sins, follies, levities, hard speeches, angers, lusts; we stand on a narrow ledge between the future and the past; the Church holds us by the hand, points to the scenes of the past, calls up all the forms in which we have stood, and bids us think of those things whereof our conscience is now ashamed. What fruit have you, she says, of all your sins? what *now have you* of the sound of tabrets, of the

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merry feasts, gaieties, riotings, schemes, rivalries? And then points to the future, tells us how little time may be left, how carefully every minute should be used.

When, as we are afraid of our past deeds, we anxiously ask, "What have we then to comfort us and give us hope?" the Church tells us we have to-day; we have this present time; we are in the world where time is; the day of doom is at hand, but not arrived; it is day here; some few hours or days may yet be left. God is long-suffering; the world lasts and we live; these are visible witnesses of His long-suffering. Mountains, seas, meadows, towns, ships, crowds of men, all the things that surround us, the whole system of the world, is a proof of the patience of Christ. Hence we have hope; the worst of us may yet be saved. Though the prophet may describe us rightly in those sad words, "Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity;" though he may say of us, "the whole head is sick, the whole heart faint;" yet this delay of Christ gives us time to hear: and not only to hear, but to act upon those other words which we have heard to-day, "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve

the oppressed; judge the fatherless; "plead for the widow."

From these words we may pass to better words still, to that wonderful pleading of God; when He exclaims, "Come, let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be like wool." So is it with us now. Thus does the blessed Jesus speak while He tarries; and He whose blood can wash clean the guiltiest soul, tarries, that He may so speak.

When the end has come and there is no world here; or when we have no portion in the world; there will be no reasoning together between God and the sinner. Time and life are for this work; there will be no call to repentance; no coming down of the Spirit to talk with us as with friends; no promise that the scarlet souls shall be made white as snow. God will have no controversy with His people; the day of trial will have yielded to the day of doom, and after the doom there will be no other places for men but heaven or hell. Rouse yourselves then, as you think of the Second Advent of Christ, and prepare.

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.

# Tracts for the Christian Seasons.

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## SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

*A Pastor's word concerning the use of Holy Scripture.*

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PROPER LESSONS : *Morning*, Isaiah v. ; *Evening*, Isaiah xxiv.

EPISTLE, Rom. xv. 4. GOSPEL, St. Luke xxi. 25.

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MY DEAR BRETHREN,

I CANNOT but fear, from what I have observed since I have had the care of souls, that very few persons receive half the benefit they might receive from the written Word of God, to which they have such free access. In these days we see the Holy Bible lying on every cottage table ; and frequently each child in a poor man's family has his own New Testament : whereas in former times very few persons possessed entire copies of the Word of God ; and men thought themselves happy if they had one Gospel, or the Acts of the Apostles, or two or three of the Epistles. But the great multitude of Christians never saw the Holy Bible at all, and were only able to hear it read in church.

*Well then, my dear brethren, if this be so,*

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surely some good ought to come of your greater privilege. Surely each one of you who has a Bible always at hand, which you can read before you go forth to work in the morning, or after you return from work in the evening, will certainly have to give account of the way in which you have used that treasure placed mercifully in your hands. Now sometimes the Bible lies long upon the shelf unused, forgotten, or wilfully neglected. I trust it is not so with you. I hope indeed that you are not satisfied with only reading a few chapters on Sunday: because then I fear much, that having a Bible in your house will be in no way a blessing to you, but rather will increase your condemnation. And because I know that great negligences of this kind often spring from ignorance, I wish to put before you some thoughts which may help you to realize how great the privilege is which you despise, and how great the blessing which you may receive, in a more reverent, careful, diligent, and devout use of the Holy Bible.

For your especial benefit, then, I make this one remark, which I believe every clergyman who has visited the bedside of the dying will confirm. No one can tell how great a comfort *is an intimate* knowledge of the Bible on the

bed of death. We have seen very many filled with joy and comfort in repeating the divine words of our Blessed Saviour, and the other words of consolation and hope with which Holy Scripture abounds; and this, after all other outward means of comforting them have been of no avail, when they could no more see what was about them, or hear what was said, or understand any new instructions. While those who know not the Holy Bible, even when we hope they are penitent, know not how to think or speak as they ought in the time of trouble; and turning by reflection to their own minds in the hours of silence find them a blank.

But I am not writing only to those who have neglected to read their Bibles. Much of what I have to say will be for the comfort, instruction, and help of those among you who have long used themselves to read Holy Scripture, and desire to be able to do so with greater profit to themselves.

Consider, then, from whom the Bible comes: it is the Word of God, His Word to man. When we read His Word we should consider that He speaks to us, and we hear His voice. It is not another who tells us what God's will is: *He tells us Himself* by His inspiring Spirit.

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For though the words of the Holy Bible were written by the hands of men ; yet they wrote not as they were moved by their own spirits, but *as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*. Surely, then, we ought to read that Holy Book with reverential awe ; since it is the Word of Him who made us : also with firm faith ; since it is the Word of Him who cannot lie : but above all with an earnest hope to find out Him in whom we have our being, to learn His blessed will, and how we may best please Him in all things, for whose glory we were made.

This, then, is the first rule for the right use of the Holy Bible, that it should be read with all reverence as the Word of our Creator.

But again, dear brethren, consider that Almighty God is our Father, in Jesus Christ ; and therefore, since He foreknew His children before the world was, He speaks in His Holy Word as a most tender Father to His beloved children. The second rule, then, for a profitable reading of the blessed Book is that we should read it with a childlike spirit, a loving, trustful, teachable, and obedient spirit. In this holy Book our Father gives us precepts of doctrine, and precepts of life ; we learn what He would have us *believe*, and what He would have us do. Here

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we find the teaching of the Church, our mother, confirmed and enforced: here we wander at large, as the sheep of Christ's fold, in those rich pastures, from which she has gathered the food of heavenly doctrine wherewith our infancy was nourished. As she was the instrument of our regeneration, God has mercifully fed us by her hand, and still continues so to feed us; but as we grow in years, she permits us to gather for ourselves as well; only prescribing for us that as we read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest, we should be in spirit as those babes to whom these things are revealed, and not as those worldly-wise, and self-esteemed prudent ones, from whom they are ever hidden.

In this spirit, then, children of God, committed to my care, as those who have been taught by the Church, and yet are desirous to learn more and more our Father's will, let us consider, in some respects, how that divine Word is fitted to be our daily guide, instructor, and comforter in the path of holiness. For be sure God has made it perfect in the place which He intended it to hold in His dealings with His elect. And it only needs that we should love it like David, know it as it was known by Timothy, *revere it like St. John*, and obey it as the



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holy Child Jesus did, and then we shall find how suitable it is to all our wants, how profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: our patient study of its inspired pages will be rewarded by a fulness of knowledge, and perfection of holiness, which, without its guidance, we could never reach.

Observe then, first, how graciously Almighty God teaches us in His Holy Word by histories of His actual dealings with His people in various ages, under various circumstances. The truths there revealed for our faith are not merely set forth in precise words as they are in the creeds, or as we commonly hear them in sermons; but one by one they are set forth with admirable clearness and distinctness, as we see one or other of the saints of God holding fast to them under various trials. Thus we see faith in Abraham, thankfulness in Jacob, purity in Joseph, meekness in Moses, patience in Job, all exercised under great temptations and in the midst of many difficulties. And thus we learn what faith, and thankfulness, and chastity, and meekness, and patience are, much better than we should do if they were described in the exactest words. These divinely-recorded histories make an *impression on us*, especially if we read them when

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we were children, which nothing can wipe out : and we read them with ever-renewed interest as we grow older. In these histories, too, so true, so natural, so touching, so full of interest, we see how graciously, tenderly, and wisely Almighty God deals with the humblest of His servants : and this gives us a good hope that He will deal mercifully and pitifully with us, notwithstanding our weakness and waywardness.

Here, too, in these histories we read the failings and infirmities even of the saints, and are thus warned against the dangers to which we likewise are exposed, and taught to walk humbly, and trusting not in ourselves, but in the Lord.

But again, the Bible history traces God's dealings, not merely with single saints, but also with His chosen people the children of Israel. We read of their early rise, their growth into a great multitude, their sore trials, their great deliverances, their many provocations, their settlement in the land of promise, their whole probation there, their fallings away into idolatry, their consequent punishment, their gracious restoration, their greatest of all sins, in rejecting Christ, and their final most awful punishment.

Here, then, we see how the favour and loving-kindness of God ever go with those who keep His

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commandments, and how surely He brings misery and destruction on those who forsake or neglect Him. And it seems to me that this whole history of God's dealings with His ancient people by rewards and punishments in this world, is recorded on purpose to teach us that Almighty God does really regard what is going on in this lower world ; which we are ever apt to forget, because the ends of our actions are not in this world, but the next. We sow the seeds here ; we shall reap the fruits hereafter. Our actions are visible, their consequences are not yet revealed. But with the Jews it was otherwise. With fire, and smoke, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, the threatenings were uttered. And by captivity and the sword, and by famines, and by pestilence, in the sight of men, they were fulfilled. (Heb. xii. 18, 19.) Thus in the history of the Jews, we Christians read a type of our own, not of a part, but of the whole. The consequences are as plain as their causes.

Let all these histories, then, dear brethren, be read with the thought of observing how Almighty God deals with His people : let us mark wherein they went astray, and avoid their errors ; let us observe wherein they kept His ways, and follow *their example*, assuring ourselves that God will

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mark all our doings, and bring us into judgment. This is our third rule for reading Holy Scripture aright.

But observe again, that Holy Scripture does far more than set before us the example of the saints, or warn us by the punishments of sinners ; it puts into our hearts and lips that very service which we owe to God. It teaches us in the most practical of all ways, by giving us wherewith to make our sacrifice of praise to God. Many lowly prayers and many songs of thanksgiving are there recorded by the Holy Spirit for our devout use ; but above all, in the book of Psalms are collected together, confession of sins, prayers for pardon, wailings of misery, earnest expression of longing desires for the grace and favour of God, and praises and thanks for His mercies of providence and grace. And these the Church has plentifully provided for our daily nourishment, appointing us two portions for every day, one for the morning and one for the evening ; and these she offers up perpetually as part of her two daily sacrifices. This, then, is the order in which the children of the Church should use the book of Psalms. I know that those who have the privilege of taking part in the Church's daily services, *find themselves* ever more and more re-

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freshed and strengthened by this frequent use of the divine Psalms. The more they say them, the more they love them. As they come to know them more intimately, they find their deep meanings ever opening out upon them : and still wonder at the mysteries which they contain beyond their reach. Just as philosophers are ever inventing more powerful telescopes, which shew them plainly in the firmament stars which before were misty and indistinct, and bring within their reach the shadowy image of others, of whose existence they never dreamt. And is not this, dear brethren, a great blessing ? that we should be allowed to use divine words of wondrous power for the utterance of our feeble hopes, and unworthy praises, and find inspired expression for our deepest wants, and keenest shame, and lowliest wailings ? Surely for this, so great a gift, we should thank God, and take courage. Now, add to what I have said about the Psalms, some thoughts about the Daily Lessons, which are appointed on the same authority, and we shall have reached our fourth rule for the profitable reading of Holy Scripture, namely, that we should read them even when we cannot attend the service, in the order appointed by the Church, both Psalms and Lessons ; then we *shall both know at once what we have to do when*

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we take up our Bibles or Prayer-books, and we shall offer a sacrifice, united to the sacrifice of the whole Church, and so acceptable through the one Sacrifice upon the cross, of which all our sacrifices are memorials, and through which alone the blessing of God can rest upon them.

The fifth rule I shall mention, and it is one without which all others would avail you little, is to see Christ in all your readings : for certainly if you read Holy Scripture aright, you will find Him there. Two chapters of the Bible suffice to record the creation, the innocence, and the happiness of man. The whole of what remains is occupied with His redemption. Fitly, therefore, in every portion of the sacred volume, is found some mention of Him through whom redemption came. For in this especially is our salvation promoted by the wise and reverent reading of Holy Scripture, that it reveals to us the unseen God in the face of Jesus Christ : and while it makes known to us the precepts which are given for the guidance of our lives, leads us at the same time to Him through whom alone we can fulfil them, for whose sake our transgressions and short-comings may be pardoned ; in whose precious blood the pollutions of sin, both original and actual, may be *washed away*. Accordingly the thought of our

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Blessed Redeemer is suggested to the attentive reader of the Holy Bible, perpetually, in all places, though in different degrees, and in many places so prominently put forward that no reader can escape it. We find Him, in whom are all our trust and hope, in the Old Testament under types and figures of various kinds. The paschal lamb slain on that night when the children of Israel were delivered from their bondage; and the blood sprinkled on the lintel, and on the side posts, point us to the Lamb of God slain upon the cross to redeem us from bondage, and Satan the great taskmaster. In Isaac bearing up the hill the wood on which his father was to sacrifice him, and yet returning alive, we first see Christ bearing the cross on which He was to suffer up mount Calvary; and then alive again for evermore on the day of His resurrection. In Joseph, sold by His brethren, cast into prison, exalted to the king's right hand, and feeding his father's children, we see Christ sold by Judas, laid in the grave, raised up again, set on the right hand of God, and feeding the regenerate children of God with the food which He has provided. In the brazen serpent lifted up, we see Him on the cross. In the rod that budded, we see Him in *His living branches*, the off-shoots of the true

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vine. In the manna we see His body given for the food of His elect. In the waters of the rock we see His Spirit poured out. In Moses we see Him "enduring the contradiction of sinners." In Joshua we see Him triumphing over death and hell, and leading His elect into their heavenly land of promise.

Thus our Blessed Lord is variously prefigured in the Old Testament; and these are only a few specimens of the types and allegories with which it abounds. But in the Psalms and Prophets, we find our Lord, by a wonderful impersonation, bewailing His sore trials, complaining of His people's ingratitude, and pouring out His prayers and thanksgiving to His Father. Take the Psalms of the Passion, that is, those appointed for Good Friday, and you will see what I mean. There you will find the same words which He spoke afterwards upon the cross, and there you will read of the divided raiment, and the lots cast upon His vesture, His awful thirst, the vinegar and the gall, and the cruel mockings. There too, or in other like Psalms, you will find the treachery of Judas, and the cowardice of the other disciples, who all forsook Him and fled.

*And if all this, and much more, is to be found*



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in the Old Testament, how much rather will you find Him plainly revealed in the New Testament ! There will you see Him doing His Father's will, submitting to earthly authority, teaching the poor, comforting the mourners, healing the sick, raising the dead, reproving the scorers, and confirming the doubtful. There will you see Him suffering for your sins, dying, that you might not die eternally ; rising, that you might rise again to newness of life ; and ascending into heaven, to prepare a place for you, and send you a Comforter to guide you into all truth.

Thus our Blessed Lord is the one object of desire. When we see in Holy Scripture the whole creation groaning, (Is. xxvi. 8, 9 ; Haggai ii. 7,) He is the one Physician of the soul, to whom in Holy Scripture we see the sick in crowds approaching ; (St. Matt. ix. 12 ;) He is the one way of life, and the one Fountain of truth, by whom in Scripture we see men pressing into the kingdom of God, to whom we see them coming to draw the life-giving waters of heavenly wisdom ; (St. John xiv. 6 ; iv. 14 ; St. Luke xvi. 16 ;) He is the one Bridegroom of the Church, toward whom we see, in the closing *pages of the Scriptures*, all faithful hearts turning

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with love and reverence. (St. Matt. xxv. 6—10 ; 2 Cor. xi. 2.)

Here then we find all that our souls can need. Here we find atonement for our sins. And here we find One who is a sufficient object for our deepest and purest affections. If it were not so, there could be no true religion for us sinful creatures. We cannot be satisfied with general views. We must have particular objects for our affections. Above all, we must have One, a Person whom we can love and revere, One in whom, now that we are fallen into misery, we can find sympathy, and with whom (in order that we may be assured of sympathy) we can sympathize. And such is He who came to be the Saviour of mankind, and when He came, stood and cried, "If any man thirst, let Him come unto Me, and drink;" (St. John vii. 37;) not "to a fountain of water which I shall shew him," but, "unto *Me*." And where, dear brethren, shall we find Him without whom we cannot live, so lovingly and tenderly set forth as in those sacred pages? Will you not confess that what I said before is most certainly true; that if you diligently seek Him there, you will assuredly find Him? See then that you do there seek *Him*. *Wait not till one shall say "Lo, here is*

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Christ," or another, "Lo, He is there;" but seek Him in His Word which is ever near you, and there you will find Him as your heavenly teacher, and the object of your love, who in the Sacraments of His Church is the food of your immortal souls, and the life of your undying spirits.

And I am quite sure that if you read with a quiet, teachable, and reverent spirit, hoping to find Him in the sacred pages, you will grow perhaps unconsciously, both in holiness and in wisdom. For you will find the truth of God ever more and more revealing itself through the heavenly writings. You will find yourself breathing a heavenly atmosphere, and thereby becoming more fit for heaven. You will also learn to trace holy truths and divine purposes holding their even course through all the various books of the Bible. For example, you will find the helplessness of man, and the sufficiency of God, so set forth, that you will feel your own great need of the divine support. You will see in the historical books those who walked with God upheld by Him, and those who trusted in themselves ever falling. In the Law you will see weak man leaning for support on ceremonies *and sacrifices* whose end he understood not;

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and the power of God training up saints for His glory in the midst of those carnal ordinances.

In the Psalms and Prophets you will find man bewailing his helplessness, and magnifying the power of God, on which he was determined to lean more unreservedly the more His ways were out of sight. And in the New Testament you will find it all summed up in the awful sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, the Man who bore our sickness, and carried our sorrows, and took on Him all our infirmities ; and yet in weakness conquered, and by dying overcame death, and by humbling Himself was exalted, and by taking sin upon Him destroyed sin, and so manifested His boundless power, His power divine, His power that was of God, because He Himself was God. The weakness of man, the power of God, behold them side by side upon Mount Calvary, and then understand how by faith we are saved, (if saved at all,) and that not of ourselves, but by the gift of God.

See then how much of heavenly wisdom you may gain by tracing one or two holy truths in this way through the Bible. For be sure when you have so traced it, you will know it far more really *and practically* than if some one had merely

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told you it was there. You will know it, and you will know others also ; for the truths of God are so linked one to another in the holy Book, that in taking hold of one you gain possession of another. The simpler doctrines of the faith, understood by a patient study of the Holy Bible, will throw light upon the more mysterious ; and the contemplation of those which are mysterious, will help us to reverence those which seem simple to us at first, but are really full of mystery and fear to those who understand them aright.

The study of the Word of God is a holy study, full of joy to those who seek Him in it with their whole hearts. May He ever assist you, my dear friends, with His heavenly grace, when you seek wisdom from its pages. To encourage and to help you, I have written these remarks ; in which I have tried to set down some thoughts which may lead you to “ mark, and learn, and inwardly digest,” as well as “ read ;” and upon these thoughts I have founded some practical rules which I will here set down again in order, and side by side, that you may remember them the better.

1. First read with reverential awe your Maker’s Word.

2. *Next*, read in a loving, teachable, child-like

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spirit ; for it is your Father's voice that speaks in His own Book ; and the mother of your new birth has put it into your hands.

3. See in the Bible how God deals with His people, and remember that He will so deal with you ; rewarding a faithful obedience ; punishing rebellion, sloth, and self-indulgence.

4. Read Holy Scripture in the order that the Church has appointed ; to which I may here add, learn portions of the Psalms by heart, and such other passages of Scripture as may be a comfort to you on your dying bed, when eyesight and hearing both fail you.

5. See Christ throughout the holy Book, and try to find Him where at first you see Him not : for there His footsteps are, and the lowly eye shall surely find them.

And yet let me add one rule more. Before you begin to read, offer up prayer to God ; pray Him to bless the reading of His Word to your souls' good, pray for His light that you may see and understand. Pray for His Holy Spirit who is revealed to us in Scripture as our Guide into all truth, whose constant presence in the Church is one great theme of God's holy Word, whose succour is ever promised to them that seek for it in *earnest prayer*.

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If you shall find assistance from my advice, if any thing that was dark has been made plain, or any thought has been suggested which gives you good hope of finding greater comfort and profit in reading God's Word, all I ask of you is, that you would remember in your prayers him who has written these words ; and is in Jesus Christ,

Your affectionate pastor  
and faithful friend.

**JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.**

## Tracts for the Christian Seasons.

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#### *Repentance.*

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PROPER LESSONS: *Morning*, Isaiah xxv. ; *Evening*, Isaiah xxvi.

EPISTLE, 1 Cor. iv. 1. GOSPEL, St. Matt. xi. 2.

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ST. JOHN the Apostle speaks these words, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Now at first sight, it might seem that the Apostle was wasting words in forbidding us to "say that we have no sin." "Who is likely," we might ask, "to say such a thing? Where is the man that looks on himself as quite pure?" One might think that every man's conscience had decided the point.

And yet we may be sure there are no waste words in Holy Scripture, least of all are these. St. John was not speaking a plain, self-evident truth, which all men knew beforehand and which all men receive now. It is possible to think we



agree to a truth, and yet when we begin to close with it, to apply it, to bring it home, we may deny it or shrink from it, or smother it up to get it out of our sight. It is possible to agree to a truth in a loose, general way, and yet when it is pressed upon us closely in particulars, we evade it, we run away from it, we try to escape the particular application: or we find that we differed as to the meaning of the thing spoken, when we thought we agreed. Thus to say that we have sin, seems a plain matter; you and I, and all our neighbours, and all the world, confess that we are sinners; the truth seems to be in us, for we none of us say that we are perfect; we all say that we have got our faults. And yet the Apostle gives us a caution; he warns us, he bids us take care not to "say that we have no sin," while we ourselves think we are all ready to confess we have sin. The fact is, it may be a harder matter to escape the Apostle's caution than we think; there may be a deeper meaning in his words than appears on the surface. Let us proceed to consider the point.

And first of all, let us consider the case of open sinners, of men who make no pretence to seriousness, no endeavours to serve Christ, who give *themselves* over to the world without concealment

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or disguise, who put the whole question of religion out of sight, who let their souls go with the current of the world, and are at no pains to swim against the stream. Now, as a fact, these men who have the most sins to speak of, are the last to say or to confess that they have sin ; they do not say it in the Apostle's sense. It is true that if we should stop them on the road and draw them apart, and ask them whether they have sin, they would in a careless way admit as much, just as they would admit it was summer or winter, cold or hot, or that they were tall or short, light or dark ; they would allow the fact in a matter-of-fact way ; but not out of the abundance of the heart would the mouth speak, not with shame, not with sorrow, not with a pierced and humbled soul ; they would simply allow they were sinners, either to get rid of the subject, or because it seemed the proper thing to say.

But would they say as much as this of their own accord? Would they come out with it of themselves? Would any confession be made at all, either to God or man, of their own will, out of the fulness of their own feeling? No. They do not stop to think what they are ; they do not feel what they are ; they take no note of sin ; like men *deeply involved* in debt, they will not

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look into their spiritual accounts ; it is their study to avoid thinking on the subject. 'Thinking over their spiritual state would but harass them, and their business is "to enjoy life," as they say, or to get on in the world. They may certainly pay a certain respect to religion ; they may come now and then to church, to keep up appearances ; but the whole course of their lives is thoughtless ; it would be contrary to their habits of life to think any thing about sin one way or other, or to say any thing about it. They will talk about feasts and revels, or trade, or politics, or farming, or horses and dogs, or railroad gambling, or pictures and works of art, but they have no heart to confess either that they have sin or have no sin. As long as they are "without God in the world," so long do they keep out and stifle such subjects ; they close their ears and turn away their heads ; they get impatient, or they feel dull, and go to sleep when serious subjects are discoursed upon. "All that sort of thing," they say, "is nothing to us ; we don't want to be preached to."

They are, as regards spiritual things, in a state of sleep, walking as it were in their sleep, not seeing whither their steps lead them, their power *of directing* their steps being suspended, hasting



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forward as calmly and contentedly towards hell and the torments of damnation, as sleep walkers move towards a precipice. These men, then, do not confess they have sin in the Apostle's sense.

Or take a less vicious class than this, men who are neither openly profane nor decidedly serious, men who avoid bold impiety on one side, and bold service of Christ on the other, men in whom we see nothing strongly to condemn, and nothing high-minded or marked with zeal, men who shrink from gross flagrant sin, and from warm devotion of themselves to Christ. These men, of good repute in the world, not beset by strong passions, are often as really dead to their spiritual state as more open sinners. Taking their line between outrageous vice and religious earnestness, they have no quick or keen perception of sin; as they have not run into excess, they see nothing in their course to afflict or shame them very much; they look complacently on a decent life; they see no call for any deep compunction or hearty confession of sin. They cannot but see that their life, as compared with hundreds around them, is orderly and correct, and when they speak of sinners, they mean profligates, drunkards, thieves, fornicators, and the like.

*It is difficult to rouse or move such men to a*

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real sense of sin ; they have not erred enough to be startled by the huge and black features of their sins ; they have sinned by grains and scruples and little particles, though these in time have risen to a great heap of guilt. How many men of this stamp, even when they come to die fail to feel their sin ; they practically say they have no sin, that is, “ nothing to speak of,” as their phrase is, nothing great, nothing that signifies much, nothing that oppresses them, or lies upon them like a great crushing load. When they are addressed as sinners, and urged to deep repentance, they seem to think there is no great need for such counsel ; they begin to assert their honesty, their uprightness, their freedom from vices that blacken other men’s lives ; they speak of their respectable and decent life, their high character among their neighbours. “ No one,” they say, “ has a word against us ; we have wronged no man ; we are at peace with all mankind ; we have done no harm that we know of.” When still addressed by some faithful pastor as sinners, they go on to say, “ to be sure we are all sinners ; we know that ; we are only men ;” but this is said in a cold way, merely as a matter-of-course statement ; there is no heartiness in saying that *they have sinned*.

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Persons of this sort, while they formally and vaguely chime in with the sentence that we are all sinners, instantly fly off from the point when you would prove from themselves the fact to which they say they agree, when we would have them admit particular sins in their own cases. They seem to be in their own sight, *sinners who do not sin*. Bring them to some particular point, and they are unwilling to bear the charge of particular sins; they fly off at once; they will not bear home-thrusts; they like us to beat the air with general phrases about sin, but not to point the arrow of reproof straight at them in some particular part; and they get affronted if we say, "Thou art the man; thus and thus hast thou sinned." They will not allow that they are covetous if we speak of covetousness, or harsh if we speak of harshness, or selfish if we speak of selfishness, or worldly, or conceited, or fond of praise. Somehow or other we cannot find the cap to fit them; they will not see their sins of omission; if they have done no kind and generous acts, suffered no loss for others, made no sacrifices, they reflect that they have done no injury, and have respected the rights of others.

Here then are two large classes of men who in act do *not heartily* and really confess they have

sin in the Apostle's sense ; if they say any thing, they say they have no sin. And what must we say of all self-deceit ? It is saying we have not such a sin which we really have, or not feeling it, if we have it ; it is saying we have such a virtue, or such a grace, which we have not. It is indeed of self-deceit that St. John speaks, " If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves ;" and in another Scripture, a particular kind of self-deceit is mentioned, " If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridl<sup>e</sup>th not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain ;" he does not really say or admit he has a sin which he really has.

And what more common than self-deceit ? We see men every day mistaking and misjudging themselves, not allowing the sins they have, thinking too highly of themselves, too little of their faults, wearing no spectacles in their own cases, and looking at themselves in the flattering glass of strong self-love, which hides the wrinkles and spots and tumours on the face of the soul. We wonder sometimes at men's ignorance of themselves ; we sometimes see a man so utterly blind to his own fault as to condemn the same fault in another in the strongest terms : the covetous man rails at his neighbour's covetous

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ness ; the selfish man is amazed at his neighbour's selfishness. Sometimes we think that we are generous when we are only ostentatious, or that we are seeking to do good when we are only seeking men's praise. We often mistake our motives, and are blind to our faults, and plaster over our worse parts, and push forward the better ; we are often either ignorant of the sins we do, or we are not alive to their exceeding sinfulness, and give them softer names than they deserve. What must we say of those gentle words by which great sins are covered over, and their hideousness softened down ; as when lust is called "gaiety," fruit of lust "a misfortune," drunkenness and gluttony "living freely, or enjoying the pleasures of the table," and oaths are said to mean nothing, and the gambler's infamous debts are called "debts of honour," and pride is called "spirit," and meanness is called "prudence."

It is easy to seem to agree with the Apostle, but the thing is to agree with him in our heart, to feel what he says, and to take his deep meaning. How carelessly have we often heard this very portion of Scripture in church at the beginning of the service ; how carelessly we have repeated it, as a *matter of course*. At other



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times our soul has been in a softer and humbler mood ; when, for instance, we have been sick, or in any trouble, when we have been drawn to a deeper sense of spiritual things, we have heard it and read it in a much deeper sense, so that it has seemed something new ; a new light has broken upon us at such times ; we have stopped and weighed the passage word by word ; we have pondered on it deeply in our heart. And this is the true spirit with which we should always read it ; we should try to make the saying that we have sin, and the feeling that we have sin, the same thing ; we should make no hollow speeches about sin.

Blessed are they who have a sense of sin, and who do not rush away from their own selves, who continually search into their own state, and face themselves, who by use and exercise have a delicate touch, a tender conscience. And why blessed ? Because if we keenly and heartily feel our sinfulness, we shall heartily long and yearn to be quit of that weight of death ; we shall arise and go to our Father, and say, “ Father, we have sinned ; ” we shall prolong not the time, but confess our sins in a true way ; we shall haste to the throne of grace ; we shall cry for pardon, remembering that if we confess our *sins*, *God*, for His dear Son’s sake, is “ faithful

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and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” And while we should pray to know and to feel our sinfulness, let us not think that it is necessary but once in our lives, on some great occasion, to have a strong conviction, or to make hearty confession of sin ; let us not think that one great act of confession, one great act of repentance, is enough ; we should be always repenting ; every night should we confess our sins to God, for “ God is provoked every day ;” every night we should own the sins of the day ; every week the sins of the week ; every year the sins of the year.

There are indeed especial times and seasons for thinking over our sins, which the Church bids us set apart for this needful work ; such is this holy season of Advent. Why have we been speaking all this while of sin ? Why have we brought such a subject before your soul ? Because the Church bids us at this time to repent, because she wishes us all through Advent to be examining our souls to see what is amiss, with shame and sorrow to spread it out before the Lord, and earnestly to seek for pardon through the blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Look at the Collect of the day ; it speaks of repentance, of John Baptist's *mission*, who prepared the way for

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Christ's first coming by charging men every where to repent; it turns our eyes to John Baptist, who with strong words lifted up his voice, and preached but one kind of sermon, and his sermon every where was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Look at the Gospel; there John Baptist, the preacher of repentance, is spoken of again, spoken of by our Lord, not as a man of soft clothing or soft ways, but as one sent to turn men to Himself by his simple unworldly life, by his stern plain doctrine.

And while the Church thus bids us think of the preacher of repentance, she tells us that all Christ's ministers must carry on the same doctrine; they also must say, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;" they also must strive to convince men of sin; they also must lift up their voice, and speak boldly, and respect no man's person; for while they have all the mystery of the gospel to proclaim, all the gracious and wonderful truths concerning Christ to teach, all the life-giving ordinances of Christ to administer, they must lay the foundation in the doctrine of repentance; they must shew men their sins, they must strive to bring them not to fair-sounding phrases and speeches about sin, but *to a hearty confession, a true deep sense of their*

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manifold faults, a strong conviction of their unworthiness. One part of their high mission is to rend the veils and wrappings from the putrifying soul, to pull the plaster from the unsound wall, to tear away the film from the eyes which self-love has blinded, to make men look boldly at themselves, and to know themselves as they really are.

Hence, in order to further the wise and holy teaching of the Church, it is good at this time to shew that men incline to deceive themselves, are apt not to confess, not to see in a strong light their sinful state, but to palliate their faults, to justify themselves, to judge themselves with an over tender heart, to get rid of the question of sin altogether, and to mutter a few unfelt, unreal phrases about "poor human nature," which mean nothing, the mere drugs with which self-love sends conscience to sleep. It is good for us to see there is some difficulty in confessing sin in the Gospel sense of confession; for unless it be so confessed, how can there be true Gospel repentance, or true Gospel hope of pardon?

O my friend, let us not deceive ourselves any more, nor put off trying to see how we really stand with God. It is high time to awake out of sleep; *high time to be seeking forgiveness,*

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carefully, and with tears ; high time to be preparing for the second coming of Christ. "The time is short ;" we are but as grass ; the days fly on as though their wings were lightning ; the world hastens to its end ; all things are hurrying on, the great day will soon be here ; all you see here, all you care for here, will soon be gone. Earthly things will pass away, float away, vanish, utterly disappear. See how the world changes ; how quickly one generation treads on the heels of another ; that infant will soon be a man, and after that gray hairs will soon silver his head, and then he will be laid low ; that old man says, "it seems but as yesterday," since he was a boy.

Are you caring for pleasure ? Well, where is that of yesterday ? Is the taste of the sweet things of the feast in your mouth to-day ? or the sweet sound of the song in your ear ? or the witty speeches of your gay friends ? Where will all such things be soon ? feasts, good fare, wine, merriment ? Are you caring for money ? Well, how long will it last, suppose you get all you want ? you will buy this and that to-day and to-morrow, and a few days more perhaps, or you will hoard it up ; but what will it do for you when the end comes, and Christ appears ? Will money *buy your soul* out of hell ? O think of the day of

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Christ, how near it may be now ! Make haste and repent, that your soul may be saved on that day. We know that our Lord will appear suddenly, in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye. There will be no herald sent before Him. Look out now upon the world. There you see some men travelling on the road, there a boy driving cattle to the field, there a woman nursing her child upon her lap, there a clergyman kneeling by the sick, there some children coming home from school, there some drunkards reeling from an inn, there a bride leaving her father's house. Well, just on such a day, and while such things are going on, it may be that Christ will come. He will come in all His glory ; He will come to judge mankind ; He will come to take account of all our deeds ; nothing will be covered, nothing hid ; all will come out, our known and our unknown sins, our earliest faults, our childish errors ; we must appear at the judgment-seat.

And even if the world lasts a thousand years more, we know not how soon we may be taken out of the world. Since last Advent many have been swept away. The Church spoke then of repentance, and said, " the time is short ;" many, whether they heard, or whether they remained deaf, can *hear the word of exhortation no more.*

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So before another Advent comes, many of those who are now alive will have passed from this earthly scene; some, it may be of those, whose eyes now rest upon these lines, will have taken leave of all things here, and are now for the last time wending their way through these solemn weeks towards the Christmas feast. Pray then, I beseech you, for grace that your eyes may be opened, and your heart touched, that you may clearly see and heartily confess your sin, for “if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.

# Tracts for the Christian Seasons.

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## FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

*One among you whom ye know not.*

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PROPER LESSONS : *Morning*, Isaiah xxx. ; *Evening*, Isaiah xxxii.  
EPISTLE, Phil. iv. 4. GOSPEL, St. John i. 19.

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It was very wonderful that He who came to redeem the world, should have lived so long in the world unnoticed and unknown. Yet thus it pleased our Blessed Saviour to live the earlier and larger part of His earthly life. The aged Simeon, and Anna the devout widow, and those who with them waited for redemption in Israel, seem to have departed this life while the holy Jesus was still a child. Then His blessed mother laid up the various sayings concerning Him in her heart ; and but few seem to have had any great expectations concerning that wondrous child, in whom the destinies of the whole world centred. He, the Wisdom of God, and the Word of God, by whom all things were made, lived as a man in His own world for thirty years unknown and disregarded. Many *were coming and going around Him* ; these



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held converse with Him ; they perceived in Him the child of the lowly wife of the carpenter of Nazareth : and knew not that He was their salvation, and the salvation of all the ends of the earth. They knew their Saviour ; yet they knew Him not. They knew the man Jesus : but they knew not God manifest in the flesh.

This seems to have been true not only of the world in general, but of His own brethren, His nearest relations according to the flesh : for if they believed Him not when He manifested His power and preferred His claim, much less did they “ know ” Him while He was pleased to hide His divine power entirely from the eyes of men, so that their intimate communication with Him availed them nothing. Their eyes with which they saw Him, and their hands with which they handled the Word of life, conveyed to them no more than ordinary impressions.

Now this ignorance of Him who was among them, so far as concerned the world in general, prevailed for a limited time, according to His own divine will. It pleased our Almighty Saviour to withhold Himself entirely from the observation of the world, until the appointed time for His public ministrations arrived. For neither did He *manifest Himself* by miraculous deeds until the mar-

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riage of Cana of Galilee : nor did He permit St. John Baptist, His forerunner, to proclaim Him “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,” until He was prepared by His baptism in the river Jordan for His ministerial work.

But with His brethren it would seem the case was different. Enough had been made known to them by the words of the shepherds, and the visit of the wise men, and the anxiety of Herod, to prepare them to mark the holiness, gentleness, wisdom, unspotted purity, and unswerving obedience of His childhood, and discover in them the tokens of the divine presence. Yet so it was, whether through their own fault or not, that of them it was equally true as of the rest of the world, “There standeth One among you whom ye know not.” And it would seem that this spiritual blindness was afterwards visited upon them, and indeed upon the inhabitants generally of the city of Nazareth, in hardness of heart ; in that they “believed Him not” when multitudes throughout all the regions round about were pressing upon Him to hear the word of God, and to be healed of their diseases, believing Him able, and hoping that He was willing, to make them clean.

*“There standeth One among you whom ye know*

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not," this represents the condition of the Jews at the time when St. John Baptist spoke; and does it not also, to some extent, represent ours? We are led to consider the question by the holy Gospel for the day. I dare say you who read this tract have heard these words this morning, or will hear them shortly. "There standeth one among you." Is He then among us now? Certainly He is. "Whom ye know not;" know we Him who is among us? Do we know in very deed that Christ is among us? Do we know and consider who Christ is if we believe that He is among us? Some I fear know Him not at all; others know Him but a little; and the best of us might know Him better than we do. Yes, Christ is among us. Let us not forget it to-day; if we forget it too often—not to-day; when we pray, "O Lord raise up (we pray Thee) 'Thy power and come among us, and with great might succour us." If we learn nothing else let us learn to remember that Christ is indeed present with us. If we forget all other learning let us not forget this, but store it up to be a principle which may abide with us all our lives and bring forth much fruit, in this world and in the world to *come*.

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Let us consider, why do we believe that Christ is with us? and how is Christ with us? By His own promise we are assured it is so, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." In the Church this promise is fulfilled. To the rulers of the Church it was given, and to their successors it was continued, and in them is fulfilled, and will be till the consummation of all things, "Go ye into all the world, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them . . . and so, I am with you always." Christ then is with the ministers of His Church, who go teaching and baptizing until the end of the world. He is also with the baptized; for they are admitted into one fellowship with the baptizers. Upon His own word then we believe that He is with us: with you who are baptized, and with me or any other priest of the Church baptizing or preaching in His Name.

Let us then never forget the presence of Christ in His ordinances, and by His ordained ministers. He is the true Priest, who by His gracious presence gives validity and power to all the holy acts performed in His name by His ordained ministers.

Again, Christ has promised, "*where two or three are gathered together in My Name there*

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am I in the midst of them.” Again then we have His own promise to trust to, and by His own promise are assured, that when we, who have been baptized into His Name, and so are in His Name, meet together in His Name, He is in the midst of us. Let us then with reverence and humility remember His presence in church. But, again, it is said in the prophet, “thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose Name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” In this third promise then we trust, and believe that Christ is present in the heart of His humble and penitent children. And the same He promises again, “If a man love Me he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him:” and again, “I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you.”

Here then we are promised a threefold presence of our Blessed Saviour. His presence through His ministers, His presence in church, and His presence (by His Spirit) in each contrite heart.

There standeth One among us—whom we see *not*. One at least there is more than there

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appear: One more than infidels, if they were with us in church, would allow to be there.

And, as St. Augustine teaches, there is particular force in the word “standeth:” it is opposed to passing by. “As Jesus passed by, two blind men sat by the way side begging, and cried, Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us. And Jesus stood and commanded them to be brought unto Him.” According to His human nature He passeth by (says St. Augustine), and those who regard Him as a mere man, look upon Him passing by. For of His human nature there was a beginning: and His human life progressed, as in other men, and He drew towards death, and He put off the burden of the flesh, and having taken it again, He was withdrawn from the world; and yet though withdrawn from our eyes He is with us still. He it is, the everlasting God, who standeth among us.

Now this we know not; or at least we forget it. Many disbelieve that Christ is especially present with His Church. They deny that His promise is fulfilled in her ministers, or to her baptized children. We, thank God, are not of this number, yet we forget, and act accordingly. We do not live as we should live, if we remembered into whose awful presence we are ever

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drawing near ; who standeth among us : whose words we hear : whose eye is upon us : whose gift is within us. “The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good,” but we Christians are especially under the eye of Christ ; because the Church, of which we are members, is His chosen home for ever. Moreover we are gifted with spiritual discernment to perceive His presence, if we would but be more watchful, and less worldly-minded, and take more pains to avoid sin, which dulls the eye of the heart, and hinders it from seeing Christ by faith.

Now in being granted this power through the Holy Ghost, we are like the brethren of Christ ; not like the great multitude of the Jews, but like His brethren, endued with special advantages ; so that if we remain ignorant of His standing among us, we do so through our own fault. Therefore to us He says, “I counsel thee to buy of Me . . . and to anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.”

Now it seems to me we really could not act as we do, if we remembered as we go about our daily occupations, that Christ is really among us, and His eye upon us. When Christ looked *round about* in anger upon those who profaned

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His Father's house they quailed before Him. When He turned and looked upon Peter, he went out and wept bitterly. When He turned Him about in the garden, and said, "Mary," she turned herself, and said, "Rabboni, which is to say, Master." How then could we deliberately and wilfully do evil? how could we go on for many days, and perhaps weeks, indulging evil tempers, and nursing up angry and proud feelings within our hearts, if we remembered that Christ Jesus was looking upon us? Especially considering that we must meet Him again face to face, when every eye shall see Him.

Now He sees us. Then we shall see Him, and He us. How then could we bear the thought of wilfully defiling ourselves, if we realized the fact that He is indeed beside us, and looking upon us?

Surely a strange blindness of heart is upon men: they are covered with a covering, not of God's Spirit, when they are led captive by their own hearts' lusts. Surely some awful misery must be coming upon those who have so hardened their conscience.

What the feelings will be of those who die under condemnation, so long as they are awaiting judgment, it is impossible to know. Whe-



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ther they will suffer chiefly through bitter remorse, as they look back upon better thoughts stifled, opportunities of repentance neglected, the suggestions of the evil one consented to : or whether they will be overwhelmed with a horrible dread of the future, that day which brings no hope to them, and the misery which follows : or whether some present pains will torment them, and only be quickened by memory and anticipation, we know not : but if they are enabled to look back, they will say of themselves that some strange mist blinded their eyes that they could not see the truth, nor know that the King in His beauty was among them.

Somewhat of their feelings we may conjecture by the miseries of repentance after some grievous sin. So long as a man goes on quietly in his sin, his conscience sleeps, nay he even justifies himself : and a strange perverted persuasion of the goodness or beauty of his evil deeds takes possession of him. The apples of Sodom are fair to the eye, and the bread of deceit and stolen waters are sweet to the taste, and even the idol-maker saith, "Aha ! I am warm, I have seen the fire."

But all those who have had experience in the *ways of sin*, confess that this sort of satisfaction

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very short-lived. When the sin is passed, and pleasure has been indulged, and the excitement of pursuit and enjoyment is over, then comes reflection, and the prospect of a future which must be passed through. And this awful unavoidable future casts back a strange light upon past evil deeds, and makes them terrible. Nay, even present unhappiness changes a man's whole feelings with regard to those past sins in which, notwithstanding their sinfulness, he once took delight.

It is surely, my brother, this variableness of our light is not right. It is not fitting for a wise man. Is there not something better for us? What should we do, and love to do, at one time, what we hate and wish were undone at another? Of what use is it that we see things in the right light after they are passed away out of our power? How does it benefit us to see the foolishness and misery of a course of life which we have lived it through? It may be, thank God, of some benefit : it may do us some good to see the right at last : but the gain will be through loss, and the sweet will be marred with the acerbous bitter. To look back upon the past, to find there blame for ourselves, to see evils which might have been escaped, bless-

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ings lost which might have been secured, wrong done which might have been left undone ; and at the moment we are making the retrospect, to find ourselves sinners well-nigh perishing, when we might have been saints prepared for heaven ; such a change of feeling and of judgment must be full of bitterness at the best. Surely it were far better if we had some principle of truth within us, by which we might judge wisely, and act prudently and rightly, as each trial comes upon us. Is not change evil in itself ? Either springing from evil or leading to evil ? Evil either in its effects or in its cause ? Is not the one only good unchangeable, in whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning ? And shall not we who were created in His image, and in Jesus Christ created anew, be most like Him when we change least ? We have no respect for a weak, changeable, irresolute, uncertain man : but him we esteem a wise and trustworthy person, who is firm, and decided, and upright, who knows his own mind and keeps to his own principles.

Where then shall we find this principle of stability in holy things ? or rather, I would say in all things that we have to do ? we cannot find it *in ourselves*. The principle of steadfastness is no

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longer in us by nature: "God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions," they have changed, "they have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water:" and whatever men are by nature, we the baptized children of God have individually almost all of us done quite enough to bring ourselves down to their level: we have done very much to grieve the Holy Spirit of God and to weaken our new nature. The fountain of all virtue is our Lord Jesus Christ, and from Him all virtues flow to His elect. He is the good Tree, who cannot but bring forth good fruit; we are the corrupt trees, which cannot bring forth any but evil fruit, unless the goodness that is in Him be communicated to us.

By giving us of the goodness that is in Him He makes us good, and thus only can we become so.

To this end He standeth ever among us. For this purpose He speaks absolution, peace, and the word of power, through His ministering priests: this is why He is ever present with His ministers. To hear the cry of our necessities, and secretly and immediately to bestow the gifts we need, He is *present in His house of prayer*: this is the

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second manifestation of His presence. To transform us into the image of His own perfection, He dwells by His Holy Spirit in the hearts of His elect: the most gracious perhaps, and certainly the most condescending, of all His manifestations of Himself to His elect.

Let us realize this ever-abiding presence of our Lord among us; and we shall find it to be that principle of stability of which we stand so greatly in need. Then shall we see things as they really are, when we remember how He, standing by us, looks upon them. Then shall we be wise indeed, when Wisdom herself dwells with us, and we hear her voice. Wisdom, the Wise Man tells us, is with the lowly. Now that unwavering consciousness of the presence of Christ of which I have spoken, is closely allied to humility. We know Him, standing among us: that is, we know Him not a mere man, but God Almighty; not merely as a babe, born, and growing up, and passing through life, and passing from life: but as God in Himself, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever: Him by faith we see standing among us, who by condescension once in an assumed nature passed by us: we know Him here present, capable of being touched with a *feeling of our infirmities*, in that He was Himself

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once compassed with infirmity, but is now, as then, the Wisdom of God and the Power of God : we know Him near : we firmly believe Him not far from every one of us : we know ourselves to be under His rule, dependant on His grace, safe only by His guidance, watched by Him, by whom hereafter we are to be judged : what remains for us but the lowliest submission, and the deepest reverence, and the humblest fear, and the meekest obedience? Humility is the first-fruit of faith in His presence. May we not hope then, that the promise shall be fulfilled in us, “with the lowly there is wisdom?”

Then let us cultivate that constant sense of our Saviour’s presence, the absence of which is reproved in those words of the holy Baptist, “there standeth One among you whom ye know not.” Let us meditate upon our blessed Saviour : not as one absent, whom we merely shall see ; but as one present, who sees us : and ever let us humble ourselves before Him, keeping our hearts with all diligence, that He may dwell there ; seeking His presence\* in church, in daily prayers ; and receiving with meekness and thankfulness, blessing, comfort, counsel, and rebuke, if needful, from Him at the lips of His priest ; then, as surely as He *who was perfect Wisdom* lay on her bosom

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who was perhaps of all saints the lowliest, so surely will He dwell with us, enlightening our eyes to perceive, and strengthening our judgment to choose always that which is right and good, and warming our hearts to love that which is pure and holy, that we may walk firmly, and evenly, and uprightly in the way that He shall choose, so long as our time here below shall last.

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.

# Tracts for the Christian Seasons.

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## CHRISTMAS DAY.

### *The Incarnation.*

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PROPER LESSONS : *Morning*, 1st. Isaiah ix. to ver. 8; 2nd. St. Luke ii. to ver. 15;  
*Evening*, 1st. Isaiah vii. ver. 10 to ver. 17; 2nd. Titus iii. ver. 4 to ver. 9.  
EPISTLE, Heb. i. 1. GOSPEL, St. John i. 1.

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“ GREAT is the mystery of godliness—God manifest in the flesh ;” and great is the caution and deep the reverence with which we should contemplate this awful mystery. The angels of God veil their faces in His presence. Let us not presume to search into those things which they dare not so much as look into. “The Word was made flesh :” few and simple as these expressions seem, no human intellect can comprehend the fulness of their meaning. Nevertheless the simplest Christian who receives the doctrine with unhesitating, undisputing faith, is made wise unto salvation, through that faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the Saviour of mankind. The very title which is here given to Him is a mystery. It denotes, in the original, both the *Reason* and the *Word* of God: the



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*Reason*, as existing in the bosom of the Father from all eternity ; the *Word*, as issuing forth from Him to give existence to all things, and to declare Him to His creatures. But how this Divine Being, who is here called the Word, which was in the beginning with God, and was God, and is expressly affirmed to be the Creator of all things, the Life and Light of the universe, how He could quit the bosom of the Father, and lay aside His essential glory, and gather from the substance of His virgin mother the elements of a human body, and be born of a woman, and yet be without taint of sin ; and how the divine and human natures should be so indissolubly united in Him as to constitute but one Person, as the soul and body make one man ; these are mysteries so far above the reach of any human understanding, that our only wisdom is not to enquire into them at all, for we cannot search them out, but to take them on the authority of God's Word, as an exercise both of our faith and our humility. Almost every heresy which has yet disturbed the peace of the Church, or defiled the purity of her doctrine, has arisen from the rashness of over-curious men, who have irreverently presumed to pry into things which God has purposely concealed ; and who without the light of revelation, or *any other light* to guide them, have attempted to

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explain *how* the Word was made flesh, or how God and Man is one Christ.

On these points, and all such points as these, the Scriptures maintain a deep and impenetrable silence. They simply state the facts. They tell us that the things are so. If we presume to seek further they give us no answer. The only passage any where to be met with in Scripture, which at all approaches to the explanation of the mystery, is the reply of the angel to the question of the ever-blessed virgin, "How shall this be?" But that, be it observed, was the enquiry not of presumptuous unbelief and doubt, but of wonder and awe; not of a proud disputer of this world, but of the lowliest of all the handmaids of the Lord, of her whose obedience is in strong contrast with the disobedience of the first woman; of her whose purity and faith caused her to be chosen from amongst all the daughters of Eve to receive the greatest honour which it was possible for Almighty God to confer upon a creature. And yet even in the angel's reply to her, how little is *explained*! He had announced to the holy virgin, "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called," that is, shall be, "the Son of

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the Highest : and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David ; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end."

Imagine the blessed virgin, the daughter of a Galilean peasant, aye, or the proudest offspring of imperial power, placed suddenly in the presence of a being of a nature more than human, and hearing from his lips such a message as this ; and you will not wonder that she should ask, " How shall this be, seeing that I know not a man ? " The question, I repeat, proceeded not from doubt or disbelief ; and the answer, though fully sufficient for the simple faith of the enquirer, was not calculated to satisfy the cravings of irreverent curiosity. " The angel answered, and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee : therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called," that is, shall *be*, " the Son of God."

This, in fact, amounts to nothing more than an assurance (with which, indeed, the angel concluded his message) that " with God nothing shall be impossible ! " With this she was content ; and we must learn to be content with *this degree* of knowledge, imperfect as it is,

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unless we will be so bold as to think that we are more worthy than the mother of our Lord to be enlightened in the knowledge of a mystery, which perhaps the highest messenger of heaven, Gabriel, though he stands nearest to the throne of God, could not have explained to her. And why should we seek to know more? Why should we think it possible, or, if possible, which it clearly is not, why should we think it profitable for us to understand such points as these, which are far too vast for the grasp of our feeble reason, and concerning which the Spirit of God has spoken nothing? Can it be right, can it be consistent with the reverence which we owe to Almighty God, can it be safe for us to dispute, and speculate, and form conjectures, where God has chosen to leave us in total ignorance; and to offer to explain those inscrutable secrets of the Godhead, of which He has not thought fit to give any explanation? Surely not.

Let nothing, therefore, tempt us to engage in argument with persons who are desirous of entering into disputation with us concerning the great mysteries of the Christian faith, especially those which relate to the Incarnation and Atonement of the Son of God. If we have in our hearts that deep reverence, which *we ought to have*, for the Majesty

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of Almighty God, we shall not dare to speak lightly, or confidently, on such matters : we shall let them alone. Whatever difficulties there may be in these doctrines, it is no business of ours to solve or consider them. Our business is to receive, with the simplicity and teachableness of children, whatever is plainly delivered in God's Holy Word, or may by necessary consequence be deduced from it ; and to shew our faith by our works. For those very mysteries of which our conceptions are the most inadequate, if so received, in an honest and good heart, are always found to exert the most lasting and lively influence on our practice. The very act of faith by which we submit ourselves wholly and without reserve to God's teaching, seems to bring us at once into a nearer communion with Him, and gradually imparts to our religious character the stamp and impress of that Spirit, who is always present with the pure in heart, and enables them to see all that may be seen of God.

“The Word was made flesh.” How we know not. But we know that “in this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him,” that “herein is love, not that we *loved God*, but that He loved us, and sent His

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Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” And that “if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” It is in this practical way, and only in this way, that the holy Apostles and Evangelists comment on the momentous truths which they were commissioned to deliver to the world. Those truths are uttered nakedly and simply, and are presented to us solely as objects of our faith. The practical comment is addressed to our reason, and to our affections; that we may sift, and weigh it, and deeply meditate upon it, till our hearts are touched with a sense of God’s unutterable love to us, and animated with a corresponding feeling of love towards Him, and to all our fellow creatures for His sake. This emotion, wherever it is truly felt, cannot be inactive. It will, of necessity, constrain us to look about, each of us in his sphere and station, for means and opportunities of following out the pattern of this divine love, by doing all the good in our power to all whom our example can affect, and who are placed within the reach of our personal influence. For these truths, that “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us,” as the glory of the Lord of old resided in the tabernacle in the wilderness, and that “God sent forth His Son, *made of a woman, made under the law, to*

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redeem them that were made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons," present us with such a view of our own needs and of the inconceivable love and condescension of God and His Christ, as almost inevitably tends to make us zealous and active, not only in securing our own salvation, but in extending to others the benefit of that deliverance, which nothing less than infinite goodness and almighty power could accomplish for mankind.

And though we have no adequate conception, or rather are wholly unable to conceive how the co-essential Word, which "was in the beginning with God and was God," could "empty Himself" of His glory, and take upon Him the verity of our nature, and be conceived and born of woman, and pass through all the feebleness of infancy, and be subject to His earthly parents, and increase in wisdom and in favour with God; yet the contemplation of these proofs of unutterable condescension in Him who was the King of Glory, may serve far better than any lessons of philosophy to pour contempt on the pride and vanity of human life, and teach us with far greater power, how precious in the sight of God are the souls of men, how lovely is the virtue of *humility*.

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But valuable as these lessons of heavenly wisdom are, and strongly as they dispose us to the love of God and the patient waiting for Christ, they are neither the most plain nor the most important of the topics which the doctrine of our Lord's Birth and Incarnation present to a thoughtful mind. They are not those on which the Scriptures lay the chief stress; nor those which are principally suggested to us in the public devotions of the Church at this season, in which we celebrate His manifestation in the flesh.

A knowledge of the *motives*, if we may venture so to speak, which induced the Eternal Father to send His Son into the world, and which prompted the Incarnate Son to undertake and to accomplish the whole work of our redemption, is far less necessary, and has manifestly less influence on our practice, than a clear apprehension of the great *end* and *design* for which He assumed our nature. That design was, through His own perfect obedience, to restore to the fallen race of mankind all the blessings, both of this life and of the next, which our first parents by transgression forfeited; and by the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit to create us again, after that image of God in which Adam was originally



formed, in righteousness and true holiness. In a word, He took *our* nature upon Him, that He might raise us to a participation of the *divine* nature: He became the Son of Man, that He might make us sons of God.

It is in this direction that the Church guides our thoughts, when, on the returning anniversaries of our Lord's birth she instructs us to pray to Almighty God, that as He "has given us His only-begotten Son to take our nature upon Him, so He would grant, that we, being regenerate and made His children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by the Holy Spirit." And, with the same view the Apostle St. Paul tells the Galatians, "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Uniformly and every where, he speaks the same language, and makes the test of our sonship to consist in that witness, which we possess within ourselves, and exhibit in our lives, that Christ dwells in us by His Spirit. Thus to *the Romans* he says, "As many as are led by the

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Spirit of God they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." And so exclusively does he rest on this the proof of our being living members of Christ, that he expressly says, in this same chapter, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

Of this principle of divine life, this "life of God," as the Apostle calls it, imparted to the soul, the Holy Spirit, whom we especially recognise as "the Lord and Giver of life," is, in some peculiar and eminent sense, undoubtedly the author: yet this indwelling of the Godhead, this presence of God within us, is in many passages of Scripture attributed both to the Father and to the Son. Thus our Lord says of Himself to His disciples, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without Me ye can do nothing:" and, again, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make *Our abode with him*:" the reason of which

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is, that in all divine operations, such as the renewing of the soul after the image of God, which can only be the work of divine power, the whole Godhead of necessity co-operates. But this I notice merely by the way, because some men have taken occasion from these, and similar passages, in which the offices of the Divine Persons are apparently confounded, to deny that there is any real distinction of persons in the Godhead.

The chief thing for us to consider, each one for himself, is this ; what evidence have we that, as far as we are personally concerned, the end of Christ's coming in the flesh has been fulfilled? Are we renewed in the spirit of our minds by His Spirit dwelling in us? And where are the tokens of our being so? I know that these are questions which the generality of Christians will not choose to answer. They will put away the enquiry utterly from them ; and will plead, that no reliance can be placed on such a delusive test, since enthusiasts and fanatics in all ages have pretended that they were led by the Spirit of God, and have actually believed that they were so. And thus it is that persons who are deficient in moral perception, or in mental feeling, content themselves with a cold and lifeless system of *religion*, in which the love of God has no place,

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and the fruits of the Spirit are not so much as looked for. Nevertheless, let the world talk as it will about the danger of delusion, in looking to the witness of the Spirit that we are the sons of God, it is certain, that nothing can be more real, or more exempt from the danger of self-deceit than this inward testimony to the truth of our adoption in Christ. It is not a question of mere feeling, or opinion, but of fact. Do you enjoy the assurance that, through Christ, you are made children of God's adoption, and heirs of that immortality, of which you have already the earnest in your souls? Have you cast away the oppressive and tormenting spirit of fear and bondage? and do you, at the same time, regard Him with the deepest reverence and awe; and feel more and more how wholly undeserving you are of the least of all His mercies; and fear above all things to fall back into worldly habits, and so forfeit the hope of your glorious inheritance? And with all this self-abasement and self-distrust, and godly fear, do you still rejoice in the privilege of approaching God, through Christ, with filial confidence, and regarding Him as your Father in heaven? Are your affections so fixed on heavenly things, that you look on this world, and all its changes

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and chances, as of no importance, except as they may affect your eternal interests, by either giving or depriving you of the means of advancing in personal holiness, and making your calling and election sure? If to these, and such enquiries as these, your conscience can return an answer of peace, rejoice and be exceeding glad; for you have a witness in yourselves of the truth and certainty of whose testimony not all the world can rob you. But if not, do not, I beseech you, lull your conscience into a false repose by refusing steadily to examine and search into the state of your soul. Remember, that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His:" and remember also, that no man can come to Christ, except the Father draw him. To draw near to Christ, and to resemble Him, we need not go out of the world, but we must, at least, withdraw ourselves, not only from its pollutions, but from its vanities and follies, that we may give ourselves to Him, who gave Himself for us, and who took upon Him, as at this time, our mortal nature, that He might "make us the children of God, and exalt us to everlasting life."

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### DEVOTION.

O most merciful Father, we thank Thee this day for the tender love that Thou hast bestowed on the sons of men in sending Thy dear Son to become man, that as man He might taste death for every man. We thank Thee that Thou didst not withhold Thy Son, Thy only Son, from us, but didst so love the world as to send Him forth from the heaven of heavens, the right hand of Thy throne on high, to be born of a lowly Virgin in great humility.

O wonderful and unsearchable, most blessed Father, is Thy divine love manifested to us in the incarnation of Thy Son; wonderful and unsearchable are Thy tender mercies towards us. Past finding out are the counsels of Thy love. We adore Thee and bless Thee for Thy great goodness; and though we fail in expressing worthily the greatness of Thy pity, we will, to the uttermost of our power, declare Thy love; yea, we will declare it with all holy thankfulness; we will praise Thy Name, O God, with the best member that we have.

And grant, most holy Father, that we may

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shew forth our thankfulness towards Thee by following the footsteps of Thy blessed Son ; grant that we may walk as obedient children, and as we have received the Spirit of adoption, so teach us both to love and dread Thee with children's love and children's reverence. May we so entirely devote ourselves to Thy service here on earth as to keep our place as sons, and at last reach the eternal home which our Lord Jesus Christ is preparing in heaven for them that love Him. In heaven, O Lord, may we praise Thee for ever ; for there shall we know Thee and the fulness of Thy love ; there shall we behold Thy glory, and look on Him who was once born into the world, and is with the Holy Ghost one with Thee in Thy eternal glory.

Grant these our prayers, most merciful Father, for the sake of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

# Tracts for the Christian Seasons.

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## ST. STEPHEN'S DAY.

### *Faith and Love triumphant in Death.*

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PROPER LESSONS: *Morning*, 1st. Proverbs xxviii. ; 2nd. Acts vi. ver. 8, and ch. vii. to ver. 30; *Evening*, 1st. Eccles. iv. ; 2nd. Acts vii. ver. 30, to ver. 55. EPISTLE, Acts vii. 55. GOSPEL, St. Matt. xxiii. 34.

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A WONDERFUL scene was that of St. Stephen's death ; it cannot but do us good to stand as it were near the dying saint, that we may see the courage with which a saint can die. We are often anxious to hear how men have died, because that is the hour of greatest trial ; it is the furnace by which their character is tried ; then they stand out as they really are ; they are then brought to the severest test ; we are never sure what men are till they are tried ; it is hard, often it is impossible, to distinguish between real and affected worth ; many men also who in smooth and easy days, in time of prosperity and health, are in much esteem, fail in time of trial ; they disappoint us ; we see that their godliness was no hardy plant, and could not bear rough weather and bleak winds ; the moment the sun of *smooth days* is withdrawn it shrinks



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could read his fate in the angry eyes of his relentless enemies; he saw them snatching up the stones to dash him to the ground; the shower of stones began to fall upon him; stone upon stone fell on his bruised and bloody limbs; the blood spurted out; his flesh was soon gashed and torn; he lifted up his voice to God; he cried out "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" he vented no word of reproach or anger against his foes; he knelt down and prayed for them and cared for them when his own pains and wounds wrought by their hands might have taken up all his thoughts; and then when they stood around, yielding themselves to the very madness of wrath, "he fell asleep;" the sting of death ceased to pierce; his spirit passed into paradise.

One word might have snatched him from all that pain; one word might have cooled down those furious hearts and turned them from enemies into friends; one word might have given him years of life. To deny Christ, to say "I believe not," to reject the faith in Christ, this was the way to escape; but from this way his faithful loving heart revolted; nay, in that hour he cried to Jesus; he confessed Him in his dying prayer: great as the temptation was to save his life, his love *of Christ* even in that hour rose above his love

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of life ; he bravely confessed Christ to be his Lord, and bravely died. When they looked on the hated saint he was "asleep," he slept covered with his blood ; they could do no more ; the pain was over ; the anguish of soul was past ; the trial was at an end ; the heroic saint had kept the faith.

Here then is a sublime instance of the power of faith and holy love, by which the natural fear of pain and death, the natural love of length of days, were wonderfully quenched ; this saint was prepared in the very fulness of health and strength to pass through the valley of the shadow of death ; he believed in Christ and threw himself into Christ's arms ; he knew not what it was to die ; but he was willing even to die ; his heart failed him not ; he was tried and not found wanting. Friendless, and worse than friendless, in that hour when men like to gather around them their kindest and gentlest friends, that they may have the last offices of love, and be comforted in their need by loving looks and words, he was ready to die amid his enemies, and to make his death-bed on the hard earth ; he counted not his life dear unto himself.

He was ready to depart, in one sense, before his *time* ; *it was no sickness that came upon him*

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which he could not fly, no disease from which he could not turn away; sickness however sharp would have been a lesser trial of his faith; for that from which we cannot escape, out of very necessity we more easily endure; but here were sufferings, here were torments, here were agonies, which he might have shunned, which it was possible to shun; and yet here was one, who for conscience sake, in the midst of life, with a healthful frame strong and unimpaired, with a body free from pain, gave himself to pain and death, and suffered his days to be cut short.

St. Stephen then is a light to us in our hour of death; he shews us what can be endured by those in whose heart Christ reigns supreme; he teaches us the mightiness of that heavenly strength that nerves the souls of heavenly-minded men; he instructs us in the way to find the bold courageous heart when the natural man is tried to the very core; we see in him the power that comes from above to the disciples who love their Lord. In the fiercest battle of an earthly war we learn that Christ giveth the victory; He bears His own through the fiercest fight, when the arrows are thick as hail and their points sharp; He gives bravery to His own and makes them strong, *so that they can pass through perils with*

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great boldness ; He enables them to tread the waters of death with fearless feet, if they will but believe and cling to Him ; He carries His own through rough places, and has balm for the sorest wounds ; He pours in oil and wine when the wounds smart and the spirit of the natural man would faint ; the greater the peril the greater the supply of grace, and the saints are especially emboldened in their deaths.

Now it is far from likely that our hour of death should be so dark or terrible as that of the first martyr of Christ's Church ; it is far from likely that we should have so friendless, so desolate an end, or that we should tread a bloody way to the grave through the violence of men. Lesser pains, lesser trials, lesser anguish, we may trust, are in store for us ; and though we cannot foresee or foretell the manner of our death, yet we may expect in these smoother times a less bitter passage. But we have great comfort in the awful hour of our change ; for if in the very worst and most terrible of the modes of death, God by His Spirit does inspire His faithful sons with great courage, and gives them great power of sufferance ; we may hope in our less fearful path to be sustained, to be upheld, to be emboldened by the same *Spirit*. We know not what mode of

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departure we shall have ; we know not what degree of pain or of trial we may have to bear. Different ways of death are before different men ; the time will come when others will be able to say of us how we died, whether we came suddenly to the grave, or wasted away through many weary and painful days. But our eyes cannot see into the future things of God ; we cannot know who of ourselves are to be amongst the greatest sufferers ; from St. Stephen's eyes was hid his last sharp trial, hid till it was close before him ; his spirit was not saddened by the shadow of his suffering lengthening itself out and falling upon him while it was a great way off. Lesser trials prepared him for his greater ; general trust in God, trust matured by degrees and daily confirmed, has ever hindered the saints from looking too anxiously into future trials ; God strengthens them as He did St. Stephen when the trial comes. But notwithstanding all the mist that hangs over our latter end, we read from St. Stephen's end the mighty succours that are poured down from heaven upon all loving sons of God. As we look at the martyr's end we may take heart ourselves.

And yet while we may wisely comfort ourselves *with the hope* of the consolations of Christ in that

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act which is the greatest, as it is the last of all acts we go through here ; there is one most important point which we must clearly and strongly see. St. Stephen did not on a sudden find Christ's love. Though the stream then flowed upon him with a fulness not enjoyed before, yet he had tasted long before of that stream of love ; God did not suddenly turn towards him and succour him ; he had not suddenly found his way into God's favour ; it was not in a day that he got heart to die. Long had his eyes looked up to God ; long had his soul clung to Christ ; long had he been growing and ripening in faith and love. No sudden desire of heaven, nor sudden contempt of life on earth, had swept over his soul ; he had been long living in sight of death, thinking of it, preparing for it, setting his house in order, learning to know God and to find God's help, strengthening himself by the means of grace, gaining nerve for his soul, acquiring contempt for the world and longings for the promised treasures of Christ. His courage was not of a moment's growth ; it had not sprung up like the gourd in a night, else it might have withered in a night ; he had been wont to walk by faith ; he had *been wont to bear his cross and deny*

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himself, and cross his natural desires, and unlearn his love of worldly things, and patiently bear lesser trials and lesser pains. Then when the great trial came he was prepared ; his weapons were in his hands and they were sharp ; his armour was on and he ready for the fight ; his hand was practised in war, and the whole man disciplined for the war.

So with ourselves, we cannot in a day learn to die ; it is not a lesson to be learnt hurriedly. We cannot at once obtain mastery over ourselves so as to order and control our minds in time of great distress. There is need of the habitual thought of death and habitual preparation ; there must be long study and long practice of Christ's law ; the end must not come upon us unawares, but we must always hold life to be an uncertain thing, and always use it for its proper end. Saintly confidence has to be gotten by degrees ; it must grow like the corn, " first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear ;" it must be learnt step by step. We must be really Christ's, among His true thorough-hearted servants, if we would have His Spirit in our dying hour ; it is not enough to cry out, " Lord, Lord," when death's arrow has gone from the bow. *Patience* must be shewn in lesser trials, courage

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in lesser pains. He, for instance, who cannot give up a few worldly things now for the sake of Christ's poor, how will he give up all worldly things easily when he dies? He who is impatient under the little crosses and vexations of daily life, how will he bear to be upon the cross of death? He who turns away from thoughts of death, how will he bear the reality? He who cannot sacrifice some trifling pleasures for Christ's sake, how will he lay down contentedly all earthly pleasures at Christ's feet? He who has thoroughly served the world and been worldly all his life, how can he hope to find God in his latter end, or to comfort himself in his death by thinking of heavenly joys habitually despised? He who has refused to receive the blessed Jesus as his Guide in life, how will he be able to say, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

Believe me, we cannot hastily turn round from a worldly life and have a saintly death. If we look at St. Stephen's death we must also look at St. Stephen's life; the last scene is the noblest, but other scenes of faith had paved the way for that. If you would have true firmness, true peace, true hope, true comfort in your last act of life, you must now walk by faith; you must now *forsake those sins that multiply and sharpen the*



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stings of death ; you must now send forth your souls into heaven ; you must now strive for the heavenly and spiritual mind ; you must now subdue the natural man to Christ's law ; you must now practise patience, learn really to despise the world, its pleasures, its riches, its cares, its show, whatever has to be left hereafter ; you must now give yourself to works of Christian love, unite yourselves to God through Christ in continual prayer, strengthen your soul by frequent Communions ; realize the unseen world, deny yourselves in worldly things that you may get your soul looser and looser, more ready to take wing. Then when the time comes at last, your spirit will not be filled with sad amazement nor taken by surprise ; you will not be overcome with an intolerable dread ; He whom it has been your habitual study to know and please, will know you in that day and remember you in the time of need : amid all the trial of leaving your earthly home and friends, amid all the sinkings of the fleshly frame, amid all the pains of dying, amid all the awful trials of flesh and spirit, you will find wondrous strength infused into your soul, wondrous consolation, wondrous gifts of grace. As the *mystery of mysteries* is about to be made clear, as

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the experience of death and of things after death is about to be made, you will be sustained by your Saviour's everlasting arms. He who knows the terrors and trials of the death of men will be with you then; divine sympathy will support you, and when your friends weep over you, you trusting in God's mercy through Christ will fall asleep in Christ as a child in its father's arms.

THE REWARD OF GOD'S SAINTS.

AWAKE, my soul, chase from thine eyes  
This drowsy sloth, and quickly rise ;  
Up and to work apace :  
No less than kingdoms are prepared,  
And endless bliss for their reward,  
Who finish well their race.

'Tis not so poor a thing to be  
Servants to heaven, dear Lord, and Thee,  
As this fond world believes :  
Not even here, where oft the wise  
Are most exposed to injuries,  
And friendless virtue grieves.

Sometimes Thy hand lets gently fall  
A little drop, that sweetens all  
The bitter of our cup :  
O what hereafter shall we be,  
When we shall have whole draughts of Thee,  
Brimful, and drink them up !

Say, happy souls, whose thirst now meets  
The fresh and living stream of sweets  
Which spring from that blest throne ;  
Did you not find this true e'en here ?  
Do you not find it truer there,  
Now heaven is all your own ?

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“O yes, the sweets we taste exceed  
All we can say, or you can read ;  
They fill and never cloy :  
On earth our cup was sweet, but mixed ;  
Here all is pure, refined, and fixed,  
All quintessence of joy.”

Hear'st thou, my soul, what glorious things  
The Church of heaven in triumph sings  
Of their blest life above ?  
Cheer thy faint hopes, and bid them live ;  
All these thy God to thee will give,  
If thou embrace His love.

Great God, of rich rewards, who thus  
Hast crowned Thy saints, and wilt crown us,  
As both to Thee belong,  
O may we both together sing  
Eternal praise to Thee our King  
In one eternal song.

HICKES.

## ST. STEPHEN'S DAY.

### DEVOTION.

O LORD, who didst vouchsafe to refresh Thy holy martyr Stephen, while suffering for the truth, with the glorious consolation of Thy divine presence; grant that we also at our departure from this life, being sustained and comforted by Thy heavenly grace, may finally be admitted to the realms of everlasting rest and peace, evermore to dwell with Thee, O blessed Saviour, who livest and reignest with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. AMEN.

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.

# Tracts for the Christian Seasons.

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## ST. JOHN'S DAY.

### *Family Love.*

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PROPER LESSONS: *Morning*, 1st. Eccles. v.; 2nd. Rev. i.  
*Evening*, 1st. Eccles. vi.; 2nd. Rev. xxii.

EPISTLE, 1 St. John i. 1. GOSPEL, St. John xxi. 19.

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“ SALUTE Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them. Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them.” With such salutations St. Paul brings his Epistle to the Romans to a close; it is but a list of names; doubtless as one by one they have fallen upon our ears we have let our attention flag; we have hardly listened; when the Apostle thus ran on, “Salute Urbane,” “Salute Apelles,” “Salute Herodion,” “Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa,” and those we have already quoted, we have not followed him with our heart; nay, we have perhaps said to ourselves, “what is this to us?” It has seemed an unprofitable repetition of names of unknown men long since passed away, in whom we have no concern; our interest in the Epistle has drooped;

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and as regards our own individual profit we have looked upon it as finished before we come to these closing lines.

And yet let us remember that the Apostle did not solely of his own mind insert what appears at first an unmeaning, uninteresting list of names; he was moved to insert them by the Holy Ghost; and hence we may be sure that there is profit to be got from this apparently barren ground, if our hearts know how to search aright. We know how often beneath dreary and waste places gold is hidden, or other precious things, such as iron and coal, which the unskilled traveller knows not how to find; we know how often herbs full of virtue and gifted with healing powers for the use of men, spring on desolate heaths and are trodden under foot by those who in their ignorance look on them as common things; while "all is not gold that glitters," much that does not glitter is of infinite worth. So likewise many parts of Scripture which at first we might be disposed to reckon among "waste places," and to pass quickly by, when more deeply searched into will be found to yield precious lessons to the soul, more to be esteemed than fine gold.

*This particular chapter of St. Paul, that is*

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this list of names, has its use to Christ's disciples. Let me shew you what this use may be.

We know that it is the royal law of Christ that we should love one another for Christ's sake, that beginning with love towards God, we should then love those whom God has so loved as to snatch out of the jaws of hell by the sacrifice of His Son. "Love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God," "Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves," "love the brotherhood," "love one another," where shall we stop in Scripture sentences concerning love? Love, love, runs throughout; it is the golden thread interwoven and glistening through the whole. Of this love St. Paul gave proof; full of love towards God and man, he "laboured more abundantly" than all the Apostles; all his labours were not for his own gain, or his own glory, or his own advancement, or his own honour; they were indeed labours of love. His whole life after his conversion is a sermon on faith working by love; in all his watchings, fastings, perils, shipwrecks, persecutions, what do we see but faith and love? These very Romans to whom he wrote were witnesses of his love; for he had taught them, fed them with the truth, nourished them, *yea, begotten them* unto a lively hope in



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Christ. And yet observe, warm as was his love for all, well-trying and well-proved, he remembers some above the rest ; he picks out some and mentions them by name, that to them especial remembrances may be made. While all were in his heart, some seemed nearer to his heart, in his heart of hearts ; some seemed especially dear and especially beloved, such as, Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, and the rest of whom we have already spoken. This is why he mentions them by name ; he sends his love to all, but to these peculiar marks of godly friendship ; these were his intimates, his bosom friends.

And in this lies our lesson ; we see by St. Paul's example, that while we are to love all men and give to all within our reach what proofs of love we can, we are allowed to bestow on some a deeper and more intimate regard. It is no breach of love, the Apostle teaches us, to love some above others ; we cannot be interested in all alike ; we cannot force ourselves to feel the same care for all ; we are not able to spread out our arms to all with equal warmth of heart ; we need not be vexed with ourselves because we cannot extend to all that same degree of love we feel for some ; we may have our " beloved Persis," our " well-beloved Epenetus," our choice friends

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in Christ on whom to outpour the stronger tide of affection.

Nay, the truth is, it is better to begin with loving and caring for a few, with those whom God has placed the nearest to us. The stone thrown into the water does not make the widest circle first; but first there is a little circle just round the place where it sank; and then a wider circle sweeps round, and so it goes widening and widening on from its little centre. So is it with love; fix your chief regard on those who are placed by God in your own home; begin there; "charity begins at home;" there shew love; there prove love; there be unselfish; there practice yourself in self-denials; there shew tenderness and loving-kindness, and there be gentle; there let the light of holy love first be lit, and let all that dwell within one house be warmed by the fires of a pious and devout regard, a regard not springing only from natural affection, but deepened, strengthened, heightened, purified, sanctified, by spiritual love learnt from Christ, love heaven-born, love caught from the Cross, love godly and from God.

Begin, I say, with your kindred, with the brethren of your father's house, with husband or wife, *with parents, or children*; and if it be exer-

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cised among them, it will be sure to overflow these limits, as occasion offers ; it will extend to others ; you will soon seek to perform offices of love to your neighbours near you ; you will soon burn to help the destitute, to befriend the friendless, to watch by the sick, to shew pity towards the stranger, to comfort the distressed. But he who hates his own flesh, he who is harsh at home, he who has no spiritual love for his kindred, no concern for their religious state, no care whether they are damned or saved, has not learnt the alphabet of Christian love. If he shews what passes for benevolence and kindness abroad, he has begun at the wrong end ; he has neglected those who claim the fulness of his love ; we must distrust his apparent charity ; it is a shallow though wide stream ; he is among the men-pleasers, not men-lovers, seeking praise and credit among men.

And did not our Lord Himself, who loved all men so as to die for all, shew different degrees of love ? Had He not, so to speak, His familiar friends, some who were as it were in the inner circle of His love, some on whom it fell in more wondrous measure, who had the larger drops of the golden shower, who not only touched the *hem of His* garment once, but stood always in

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His presence, into whose ears He poured His deeper sayings, and who were, if we dare to use the phrase, His "bosom friends." Such were the twelve, that little band who had the grace given them to journey with Him, to sleep and watch with Him, to live with Him, to suffer with Him, to share His reproach, to shelter themselves under the shadow of His wings, who were, as it were, His family moving with Him, Himself the centre of a moving home.

And out of these twelve there were a "beloved" three, St. Peter, St. James, and St. John, who had a nearer place to the Holy One; and out of these three beloved ones, we see one loved above them all, one who was "well-beloved," the Apostle John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved." He it was who not only stood always in His presence, but "leaned on His breast," was indeed His bosom friend, followed Him into the hall when the others fled, stood by Him when He was in His agony on the cross, had the blessed Virgin the Mother of our Lord committed to him, was raised even to the rank of brother of our Lord, when the Lord said in delivering the Virgin to his care, "Behold thy mother."

When we read the writings of this most favoured saint, we see that on him fell the larger

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portion of Christ's love, for his pen, especially in his Epistles, seems to be able only to write of love. He had caught the most of his Master's love, for he had leaned even upon His breast; and yet we must suppose that while he was shewing forth love to all, he had his chosen friends, especially must we believe that the blessed Virgin who became to him as a mother, whom he took to his own home, had the fullest light of that affection which should always burn the brightest there.

Hence then, not only from St. Paul's example, but from our Saviour's conduct towards the three disciples, and particularly towards St. John, we see that Christian charity, though it is to be wide and large and ever ready to expand, has its various degrees of warmth, its various depths. We are not expected to love all the "brotherhood" alike; we are not to affect to love all alike; we may be sure, that particular charity must go before universal charity; the root must spring up from our hearth, before the branches can spread abroad; before we love all men we must love some men; and I need hardly say that, if we are to begin with loving some men, those who are our kindred, those who dwell in *our house* and have been united to us twice, first

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by blood, next by baptism, both by natural and by spiritual relationship, should have the first and the best of our regard.

Yes, family love is that with which we should begin ; in our own family our first duty lies ; there we should most unbosom ourselves and make heart answer to heart ; there love is more hidden, less exposed to view, and therefore we are there more sure of its reality ; for when we go abroad to do good we may be tempted to shew kindness for the sake of earthly praise, that men may speak well of us, that our ears may be sweetened by the dangerous voices of our neighbour's applause. He who neglects his wife, and is kind to strangers, he who neglects his parents, and is the life of companions he finds abroad, he who neglects his brethren and his sisters, and exerts himself to please chance friends, is very far from the mind of Christ. A kind father, a kind mother, a kind son, a kind sister, will not, we may be sure, be unkind and unpitiful and unmerciful towards their neighbours or towards strangers ; they will remember Christ's poor and His afflicted ones ; what they have learnt at home and delighted in, they will delight to exercise abroad. Such will be the first to issue forth on *errands of mercy and compassion*, the first to

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go forth and assist whom they can as best they can ; and it is to such that men will fly instinctively for help in time of sickness or distress ; for they will ever feel that from a holy loving home, those are to be found who are ready to minister to the distressed without, to feel for the afflicted, to be tender in time of trouble.

And while I speak of love I am all along speaking of that which is from above, of religious, godly love, of that divine gift of charity which is infinitely beyond mere natural sympathy and affection, which is infinitely purer, infinitely higher. Yes, natural affection, human sympathy in its rude state, unenlightened by God's grace, and without religious motives, falls far short of that which we should seek as members of Christ, or as beings who have to live for ever, and from whose eyes the earth and earthly things so soon must pass. We may see a mother caring for a child and a husband for a wife ; but this care is often for their earthly comfort, their earthly well-being, not for their soul's ; the mother grieves when the child is sick, rejoices when it is well, toils and labours for it, watches over it by night and day ; a husband cares for his wife, endures toil, rough weather, wet and cold, for *her support*, not grudging these labours ; but

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often in either case there is all the while no love for the soul, no holy heavenly love; it is all of earth; it is all about things here, about health or sickness, prosperity or adversity on earth; the heart does not look beyond; whether that child or that wife shall be in heaven or hell, whether among the redeemed or lost, whether in eternal torment or eternal joy, is often a matter of no anxious thought. But are we to bound our view, to narrow our thoughts to the limits of this narrow life which is but as a span long?

It was not thus that St. Paul loved "Asyn-critus, Phlegon, Hermas," and the rest; it was not thus St. John loved the Mother of our Lord when he took her to his home; it was not thus that Christ loved St. John and that Christ now loves us; it is not thus that Christ would have us love one another. Nay, let not love be an earthly flame, lit for a few days and then burning out; we are thrown together in our several earthly homes that we may in holy love help each other along the way to heavenly homes; we are now knit together for a time that we may be knit together for ever in God's eternal house; we have souls united to us by special ties, whether as brothers or sisters, wives or husbands, that we may in *our earthly dwellings* help to prepare



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each other for our dwellings in the heavens. Let not all our care for one another be cramped and narrowed to things of our present state. Care not only for the present ease or peace or joy of the brethren of your father's house. Love them with an unearthly, spiritual, eternal love; love their immortal souls; seek their salvation; pray for them, lead them on, pray with them, guide them, encourage them, walk in the house of God as friends, sanctify family affections. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, not only for yourselves, but for them who dwell in your house; use all means within your reach for gaining or for deepening in them a love for the things of God. O how fearful to have no other than an earthly love! How fearful to have forgotten our kindreds' souls, to have done nothing for their salvation, to wake up hereafter and see them perishing in hell, to behold the children we danced upon our knee lost through our neglect, the wife of our bosom lost, the brother or the sister lost! How fearful to see those who once sat round the same hearth on earth, whom we might have influenced, whom we might have won, whom we might have had the grace to draw to Christ, separated, torn asunder, suffering in that *world of woe*.

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Ye who now gather round the same firesides, think of each other's souls ; be companions and yoke-fellows in the things of God ; see whether you cannot be united in the kingdom of the Lord, as you are now under one common roof ; seek to be one in Christ in this world and for ever ; though death must separate you for a time, yet so live in godly love, so help each other as fellow-travellers to heaven, that you may be joined together at the feast of the Lamb, where the powers of love will be increased ten thousand fold, and will be purified as gold tried seven times in the fire.

And is not this a time to speak of family love ? Do not kindred now meet together and come from distant parts that the Christmas feast may be spent at home ? Have not these gatherings of friends and kindred sprung from the holy thankfulness of the Church for the birth of Christ, who makes brethren ten times more brotherly, and who makes strangers to be received as brethren. Right is it that we should light the torch of family affection from the light upon the altar, that the power of Christ working among us should cause us when we rejoice in Him to rejoice in one another, and especially in the brethren of our *father's house*. *It is the true and right time for*

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the exercise of family love. But let not these meetings of friends degenerate; let not them sink into mere earthly merry-makings; most unseemly is worldly mirth at such a holy time. Rather stir up the fires of religious affection on your hearth; kindle afresh holy friendships in a holy way; rejoice together in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; rejoice as St. Paul rejoiced in his godly friends; as St. John rejoiced in the love of Christ. Even as St. John leaned upon the breast of Jesus at the supper, so let us draw near to Christ and pray Him to come down amongst us when we meet, that He may look upon holy homes and sanctify them by His presence; let us look upon one another as brethren whom He has joined together in double bonds; and as the child kisses the mother's cheek and the friend presses the hand of friends, and all rejoice together, let all remember the source of all true union, even God, and so love each other as God charges us to do, holily, religiously, with that charity which is immortal, which will be perfected in heaven when the world has passed away, through the mercies of Jesus Christ.

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### DEVOTION.

LORD of love, who art the fountain of all  
fill our souls with holy love, that we may  
see and all whom Thou hast loved. Thou  
taught us in Thy Holy Word to love Thee  
fill our heart, and to love our neighbour as  
ourselves; enable us to act according to Thy  
command and will, that we may please Thee, and  
dedicate ourselves to Thy love; enable us to  
follow the example of Thy holy Apostle St. John,  
who has given us so bright a pattern of fervent  
love, who was so tenderly beloved by Thy  
Son, and who, inspired by the Holy Ghost,  
spoken so many excellent words concerning  
ourselves and our soul's use.

At this time, O Father, when in Thy Church  
we praise Thee for Thine own unspeakable love  
to all mankind, and Thy Son's most tender  
love, O Thou give us the soul of true charity, that  
we may be warmed with pious affections for the  
members of our father's house, and may succour  
everywhere *who are in any trouble or distress*

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At this time it especially becometh us, who a Thy children by adoption and grace, to a lovingly towards all men. Both at home, O Lord and abroad, the spirit of love should rule our hearts. As Thou gavest Thy Son for us, should we give ourselves to our brethren, succouring them, relieving them, praying for them, leading them in the right way, comforting them and being always gentle towards them.

O gracious Father, we come to Thee for help that we may abound more and more in love, that we may learn to be more unselfish and self-denying, more generous and gentle, more kind and pitiful. Help us, good Lord, we pray Thee, for Jesus Christ's sake, Thy dear Son, our Saviour

## Tracts for the Christian Seasons.

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### THE INNOCENTS' DAY.

#### *Christ's Love of Children.*

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PROPER LESSONS : *Morning*, Jeremiah xxxi. to ver. 18 ; *Evening*, Wisdom 1.

EPISTLE, Rev. xiv. 1. GOSPEL, St. Matt. ii. 18.

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CARRY back your thoughts to the days when our Blessed Lord was a child among men ; and when Herod, seeking to kill the Lord of life, sent forth to slay " all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under." Let us but strive to see that scene, and to place it before our minds. Let us suppose ourselves in the town of Bethlehem on the morning of that bitter day when Herod's soldiers came to execute the decree of death. Many a mother that morning ; woke joyfully from her sleep, and with a mother's love shielded her child lying calmly by her side ; many a mother's eye glistened with fond ardour over the little soft round limbs, or the guiltless face of the child that was nestling itself on her breast ; many a mother's heart beat high with hope as she thought of the growth of her little one, of the

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comfort that it would bring her in her age, of the manly stature and comely look, of the honour and good name it might reach in its riper years ; all looked bright to the eye of hope. No cloud was in the sky ; no shadow of coming woe darkened the door of those happy homes where children were ; no dark rumour had stridden on with the hasty steps of evil news to startle the mothers from their joy. The sun rose with its usual light ; men hastened from their beds to enter on their usual toils ; there was the bustle of a common morning when the labour and traffic of a little town begins ; one father went this way, another that, issuing from their homes with trustful and unsuspecting hearts, thinking to come back at night and to dance their little ones on their knees ; the mothers rose with equal lightness of spirit and sang their songs to the infants in their arms, and fondly watched those that were older as their little feet moved across the floor. Who could guess that any fearful storm was about suddenly to break upon the place ? The day began as other days ; all thought that it would end as other days ; there were many happy homes when the sun arose ; all thought that those homes would be as happy when it set.

*But behold, suddenly Herod's soldiers are in*

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the town; suddenly their swords are drawn; suddenly there is a loud scream in the street, an exceeding bitter cry; one has snatched a child from its mother's arms, and while it smiles in the murderer's face the sword has pierced its heart; another has burst into a house from which children's laughter came, and there the little one is seized and dashed pitilessly to the earth, the blood spirting over the mother's feet; from street to street the murderers hurry on, from house to house, wrenching the innocents from the breasts of the stunned, amazed, terror-stricken parents; no mercy, no pity is to be found. Sometimes a mother will throw herself between the soldiers and her child, to save her child, to suffer in its stead; but her child is not saved. Sometimes she will clasp the soldier's knees and kneel at his feet, and in an agony of grief implore, beseech, crave for pity, but she is thrust back and her child torn from her all the same. Sometimes the mothers, wild and maddened, dash forward they know not where; but they are pursued, and their little ones' blood soon stains the street. Sometimes they will crowd together out of sudden but powerless sympathy, and the soldiers only slay more thickly there.

*Even in an hour how many homes have been*



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thinned ! how many hearths dyed with children's blood ! how many mothers have lifted up their voices and wept aloud ! As the murders thicken, so does the grief rise and swell. O who can tell the bitterness of that day ! Here hastes a mother screaming wildly in her despair, with loud piercing cries that go to the very heart ; here another is stretched stupified and senseless on the ground ; here another sits with clasped hands, silent, still, overwhelmed with grief, without tears, without words ; here another is kneeling down passionately kissing the cold pale cheek of her little sleeper, wetting it with her warm tears, sobbing as if her heart would break. It is a wide grief, great and deep as it is wide, a sharp sudden sorrow that has gone to the very quick, that has torn many hearts in twain. Scarce a house is free from woe ; we wander through scenes of misery such as cannot be told ; sorrow is on every face ; stern men are seen to weep ; the afflicted ones know not how to think of comfort ; who is to comfort them where well nigh all are suffering ?

O most bitter day on which a whole town wails, and heaviness is in every heart ! the tongue of the comforter cleaves to the roof of the mouth ; what can be said to so many mourners ? Changed, *sorely changed* is that town of Bethlehem since

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the sun rose ; joy has been turned into sorrow, life into death, hope into despair, gladness into agony, laughter into mourning and tears. Short-sighted race-of man, how little do we know what will happen ! and while our comforts throng round us and all is fair, lo, all is gone, all darkened, all made desolate, all stricken, made to wither, blasted and dead.

Now could these mothers rejoice in the birth of Christ which brought all this sorrow to these homes ? Could they look back to the first Christmas and thank God ? Yes truly ; they had need to love Christ, even though for His sake, by reason of His birth, they had been called to such sudden and sore distress. Though their children then suffered for Him, did He not suffer afterwards much more for them ? He came to be their Deliverer, their Saviour, though He seemed only to bring them pain. He came to shew them love past words, past thought, past all conception of men, though He seemed, like Joseph with his brethren, to deal roughly with them at first. He came to raise these children to a place very near Himself ; for as He made them taste of His cup of suffering, and to be baptized with their blood before they had committed sin, they were thus drawn *very near to Him* who was the great

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Sufferer; as He caused them in some sort to share His crown of thorns, so did He thereby shew them His desire to number them among His dear brethren and true yoke-fellows.

In all these sufferings of the Innocents Christ's love was at work. It is a law of His kingdom that all His must suffer; and happy are they whose sufferings come in the morning and dawn of life and quickly end; happy are they whose sorrows, though sharp, are short; whose pains are not stretched out through many years; whose lips taste of an early cup of bitterness and then taste no more; whose earthly sun, like that of the northern climes, rises and sets in a few short hours, making a scanty and contracted day.

Who can doubt the love of the most loving Jesus for the little ones? Watch an infant's day; see over how guileless a life the hours roll; where are the strong passions, where greediness of gain, where selfishness and self-seeking, where ambition and pride and self-conceit, where loud angers, foolish jests, malicious words, lies, exaggerations, or other faults of the tongue? Though there is a root of sin, yet the root has not put forth a stem and leaves, nor thrown abroad wide branches to darken the earth. *Never is the soul so pure, never do such pure*

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pass as when the tongue is mute, the heart  
le to know or to love the world, and the  
in the world, but not of it in any active

Hence, if there be the greatest purity  
ing infants and little ones, so then we must  
ve that they have the very fullest portion of  
st's love. Only consider how He spoke and  
; with children, how He took them up in  
arms and blessed them, how He declared  
of such is the kingdom of heaven, and that  
must be converted and become as children;

when His disciples, the best of full-grown  
, were striving together, He took a child and  
him in the midst of them as the guide and  
ern even of Apostles. He who runs may  
. Christ's love of children.

Hence, I say, we may be sure that His love  
at work among the infants of Bethlehem  
n He suffered their blood to be spilt. That  
id-shedding only bound them to Him the  
e; it was a type and forerunner of His own  
ifice; these lambs of the flock that went  
re Him on the bloody way, prefigured  
slaughter of the Lamb of God; and thus  
re was high grace, high honour, high love  
towed on these young sufferers, when they  
ked before *Him* with His badge of disciple-

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ship, with the true marks of the Lord Jesus, with the tokens of suffering, telling the world that He their Lord was on His way to death. Not in anger nor in indifference, but in love, He let Herod's decree of death be fulfilled upon them; and while He was the cause of their death, He was on the way to do great things for their life. Yes, for think of Christ's love; to what did their death lead? Bitter as was the act, what was there beyond? Surely those souls went to paradise; by that painful gate of death their souls found an entrance into a place of great joy; they passed forth into the blissful chambers where saints rest till the judgment; they hasted by a quick way to pleasures such as the world cannot give; they tasted of death thus early, that early they might reach a better world; merciful was the pain that opened the door to the release of their souls from a troublesome world into one whereon no cloud, no shadow of trouble can ever fall.

And who, I ask, gained them this rest beyond? Who let the souls of men into paradise? Who opened the doors of the peaceful land? Who caused it to be "gain" to die? Who is the Author of true eternal life? Who gives the saints *the joy of paradise*, and then afterwards the

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more perfect joy of heaven? Was it not the Holy One who led these children into woe and pain, who exposed them to the sharp, startling arrows of sudden death, the Giver, the Gainer of all their peace and joy beyond? He it was who turned death into life, and who through this short sorrow, this moment's torment, sent forth their souls into Abraham's bosom, and hurried them from an evil world into the pure and blessed regions that lie above the reach of evil.

In this then our Lord shewed them more than their mothers' love. He took them from evil to come, from many trials, from many cares and griefs, from many temptations, from many hours of sickness, from the slower forms of death ; while the mothers would have kept them here, would have wished them to tarry in this place of tainted air, this valley of poisonous vapour, where souls may be tempted, betrayed, attacked on all sides, poisoned, lost.

Not only towards the children may we trace the motions of Christ's love, but even towards the mothers we see it gushing forth, a divine stream issuing from a dark channel of distress. Consider, I beseech you, the cares from which they were saved by the early death of their little ones. *Many were the griefs which doubtless*

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would have weighed them down had all these young ones grown up to man's estate, suffered man's temptation, and fallen into man's sins. O what great anxieties throng parents' hearts when the world, the gay, dazzling, tempting world, opens upon the eyes of their children, when passions begin to stir within them, and their blood warms, and the baits of the world glitter before them, and its pleasures beckon them away from God. From such anxieties these mothers were mercifully spared; though in one little moment a great grief broke upon them, yet Christ's love raised that sudden storm, that after it they might have the truer and surer calm. Full of peace after due time must have been the hearts of these Rachels who at first refused to be comforted. Happy must have been their thoughts of their little ones; and as they beheld sin, lust, vice, folly, gathering their victims from year to year, they must, we hope, have learnt at last to bless God for having snatched their children from these paths of a worse death, from the ways of eternal death into which they might have been drawn.

Now in considering Christ's love for the Holy Innocents of Bethlehem and the coasts thereof, have we not all the while been gleaning comfort *and wisdom* for ourselves when our little ones

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are taken from our homes ? In children's deaths in our day we read the same hand-writing of love. Love takes them hence ; love cuts the slender thread of life ; love snatches them from our breast to give them a better shelter, a better place of rest. While they suffer, the eye of love is upon them ; they are drawn near to Christ ; He is at work among them in their sufferings ; He knows, as He appoints, all their pains ; the All-merciful is at their side ; while sin stands before us in its own hideous features as we behold infant suffering, while we see the fearfulness of sin in the pains of those who only have the seed, not the branches and leaves and fruit, yet we also see Christ's love making a way for the souls of the little sufferers to escape from the dark chambers and prison of the world into the land of light. They cannot reach paradise without pain ; but what are the sharpest of their short pains to the joys which gladden their souls the instant that death is past ! Happy are they whose feet press the earth only for a little time, who never gain that knowledge of sin which cannot altogether be hid even from saints when they are abroad in the world, whose souls are soon borne aloft far out of the reach of the devil's highest darts, who are soon treading the fields of *paradise*, whose eyes soon cease to



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look on an evil fallen world, who live not long enough to have to wrestle with the world, whose spirits pass from earth in their more guileless days before the bloom has been brushed off by contact with the world, before their baptismal robe, white and shining, has been stained and soiled. Most happy are they whom the blessed Jesus takes to Himself, and adds to that pure company of little ones who are His beloved ones, the lambs carried in His bosom.

And therefore is not this a time for mothers who have been bereaved of their children, to bless God for the birth of their dear Lord, through whom their innocents have been admitted to their rest? Is not this a time to see Christ's love shining upon them in their distress, and to confess that His love was bestowed upon their children in their removal hence? Is not this a time for them to think joyfully, comfortably, thankfully, of those whom they have lost, and to bless God that they are safely sheltered in a world where devils cannot tempt or destroy, where men cannot deceive or entice, where sin cannot enter, where pain is not known, where the rest is Christ is sweet?

O ye whose hearts have ached sore for the *young ones* whom God has taken from your love

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ing arms, comfort yourselves at this time with the devout contemplation of their bliss, and of Christ's love both for you and them. Wish not to receive back those who have been taken hence; their pains are past; you saw them suffering and you wept very bitterly; but now think of them as they are; think of them as the beloved of Christ; strive to follow them to the place whither they have gone; pray to be joined to them in the life to come; copy their guilelessness, their innocence, their trustfulness, their purity; you can go to them, though they can no more come to you; wipe away your tears, and in the strength of the Holy Ghost rouse yourselves to a holy life; set forth anew upon your Christian path; seek after childlike tempers and childlike ways; prepare yourselves for your own hour of death, and think of the joy, the rapture, the ecstasy of joy that will fill all your soul, if you should meet your children in heaven, if you should be joined to them forever, and for ever behold them in the presence of God. Weep not then very sore; sorrow not as though you had no hope; think of the brightness of your hope: whenever you see sin and trouble, think of your children's escape from these trials of our life on earth.

*Let your children also be your guides to heaven;*

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whenever you are yourself tempted to commit sin say to yourself, "Shall I meet my child in heaven if I yield to sin? Will not this sin weaken my hope of joining my little one? Is not my little one with Christ, and will not this sin separate me from Christ and all who are His?" In times of temptation the remembrance of your child may often, by God's grace, give the balance a turn to the right side; it may often check you when you are about to yield to thoughtless or vicious ways; it may often cheer you on in your struggles with the devil and the world; it may often make you quicken your steps in Christ's way when you were getting slow and slack in your course. Your child ever calls to you out of paradise; it speaks to you and presses you to come up, by God's mercy, where it already is; it beckons you upward. We have indeed another link binding to Christ when He has taken away one of our little ones; we have sent one before us into Christ's presence; and shall we turn our back on Christ and refuse to follow? Shall our child be with Christ and we with the devil? Shall our child be with God and we with the world? Nay, when the world has passed away shall our child be in heaven and we in hell? *Think of this in seasons of temptation.* God

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ou to Himself, God your Father in heaven  
to have all His children in heaven, and is  
willing that any should perish. God has  
led you that you might be His, and more  
ly follow Him while you are here ; He has  
he cup of sorrow into your hand that He

hereafter give you to drink of the cup of  
sting joy. All afflictions, all hopes, all  
vements, are for our soul's good. Let us  
then to turn our losses into gain and to  
Christ in our sufferings, that we may be  
watching and waiting for Him with a true

O blessed day of Christ, when the Rachels  
see their Innocents, when children and  
ts shall meet together in Christ's kingdom,  
the dead shall be raised out of their graves,  
those whom we have laid in the earth, with  
d hope, shall put on their immortality, when  
the faithful ones of the Church, all griefs  
for ever vanish, when all clouds of affliction  
be dispersed, when bitter partings shall  
to be, when the redeemed shall sit down  
e everlasting Feast, and our earthly life,  
present years, with all their trials and all  
chastisements, shall be as a dream in the  
, as a tale that is told. May God the Holy  
teach us to prepare for the light of that

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day, and give us strength so to confess our Saviour on earth that He may confess us at His second coming.

### COLLECT.

O ALMIGHTY God, who out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast ordained strength, and madest infants to glorify Thee by their deaths; mortify and kill all vices in us, and so strengthen us by Thy grace, that by the innocency of our lives, and constancy of our faith even unto death, we may glorify Thy holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

# Tracts for the Christian Seasons.

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## FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

### *The love of Life.*

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PROPER LESSONS: *Morning*, Isaiah xxxvii. ; *Evening*, Isaiah xxxviii.  
EPISTLE, Gal. iv. 1. GOSPEL, St. Matt. i. 18.

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AT an early hour there was a loud ring at the door of the parsonage one Sunday morning, the first Sunday after Christmas. The servants were just lighting the fires, and hastened to the door, as they felt something must be the matter. "O, ask the rector to come down to Mrs. Brooke's as quick as possible, for we're afraid she's a dying," exclaimed a labouring man the moment the door was opened. You may be sure that the rector was quickly on his way. It was just beginning to be light when he hurried forth, and there was the promise of a clear frosty day; the air was keen and sharp, but it was very still; the ground was crisp with frost, and it crackled under his feet. As he reached the village all seemed calm and quiet; here and there the smoke was beginning to rise from a few of the cottages, but the children who usually gave noise and life to the scene were fast in bed, or the frost kept those within doors

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who were already up. The old church tower seemed in the twilight to have increased in strength and height, and looked so strangely solemn as it rose high above the houses of men, that the rector could not but stop a moment to glance at it on his road. "O blessed place," he exclaimed to himself as he pressed on, "how long has that old tower preached to the people here, and pointing upwards to heaven bidden them to rise above the world, and to seek the blessedness of heaven, which Christ Jesus our Lord offers to all the members of His universal Church." The school which seemed to cling for protection to the church, and had a certain church-like look about it, was as quiet as the other parts of the village; the usual hum of a multitude of little voices saying their lessons, or singing their Sunday hymns, had not yet begun. How calm it all is, thought the rector to himself; who would think, on looking at the outside of this tranquil place, what a scene of deep trouble and anguish is going on in the midst of it. At last he reached a small farmhouse just at the outskirts of the village, and offering up a secret prayer that God might bless his ministrations, and succour with great gifts of *the Holy Ghost* the dying sheep of his flock,

he passed hastily through the little garden that fronted the road, and lifted the latch of the door. The moment his step was heard, a young girl of sixteen, one of the daughters of the poor woman, caught the sound, and rushed down stairs to meet him ; grasping him warmly by the hand, while the tears streamed from her eyes, she said, " O sir, it will be soon over ; it will be soon over ; dearest mother can't hold out long ; thank God you're come." " God help us for His dear Son's sake," said the rector as he followed her up stairs. " Amen, Amen," exclaimed the poor girl fervently.

When the rector entered the room he saw in an instant that the end was indeed near. He had been there late the previous evening, and had thought Mrs. Brooke sinking fast ; but the change was now more decided still. She had been able then to join audibly in prayer, and to talk in a feeble way ; but now all powers of speech were gone. A faint smile played upon her face when she saw the rector enter, for she had always esteemed him as her best and truest friend, and had received him as a guide sent from God. He hastened to her side, and tenderly pressing her hand looked earnestly into her pale face ; *as eye met eye, heart answered to*



heart ; and without a word being spoken, they held deep, strange, most holy intercourse with each other. Her children stood weeping by her bed : the eldest was a young man about six and twenty, who had managed the little farm since his father's death ; there were three daughters, the youngest about fourteen. Never had children been loved by a mother with warmer or holier love ; never had a mother received from her children stronger affection in return ; it was indeed a united family, one in Christ, a holy household in which Christ reigned. The young farmer had been his widowed mother's stay, and had acted as a father to his sisters, while all his worldly business was done in faith ; he was most careful of his labourers, called them all together for morning and evening prayer, corrected the slightest sins of speech, sins so common among labouring men, saw that they all attended church on Sundays, went himself, whenever it was possible, to daily prayer in church, was very kind and tender to the poor, in short, in all ways was endeavouring to be a faithful and devoted member of Christ's Church in his sphere of life. Such was the son who now stood by his dying mother's bed ; of such a spirit too were the daughters, and thus *had God blessed their mother's prayers and labours.*

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When this first silent greeting had passed, the rector opened his Prayer-book, Mrs. Brooke slightly moving her head in token of her desire for prayer. All knelt down; the prayers then offered were prayers indeed; the souls of that little company were poured forth even in an agony of prayer; the voice of the faithful pastor sometimes quivered with emotion, but with great effort he endeavoured to calm his spirit; sobs burst from the rest. When he had commended the soul of his dear friend into the hands of God, and had given his blessing in God's Name, they all remained a few minutes in silent inward prayer. On rising from their knees the eldest daughter bent over her mother's face. At the first look she stood aghast, and then, clasping her hands, she exclaimed with a bitter piercing cry, "She's gone! she's gone!" It was too true; the soul of the good servant of Christ had gone forth, while their heads were bent in prayer. She had died in the act of prayer; blessed way of death! most holy and hopeful end!

The grief of the little loving group cannot be described; words fail to paint that mysterious pang which pierces the souls of any who gaze on the death of near kindred who have been truly loved. *For a time* the rector said nothing;

he was himself greatly overcome ; long did all stand by that silent bed, sometimes gazing heart to look on the calm face so unmoved unconscious of their grief ; then bursting tears and turning away their heads. At last the rector knelt down and they all followed. Earnestly did they all thank God for having released the beloved sufferer from her pains for having taken her to Himself ; and earnestly did they ask for the comfort of the Holy Ghost that they might profit by their great affliction, find grace to follow the example of the departed saint, and at last be partakers with her of the heavenly kingdom. Then leading them gently from the room the good pastor spoke some tender and consoling words, reminding them with holy confidence they might think of their mortal state, and how blessed is the portion of all who like her fall asleep in Christ. He then withdrew, thinking it better to leave them for a while to themselves, and bent his steps homeward.

As he came out into the fresh air from the bitter scene of death, he could not but think within himself how hard it must have been for such a mother to part, even for a time, with a family. It is true, he said to himself, that *she has gone to a better world ;* it is true also,

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as her children are so far treading in her steps, there is every hope of their meeting her in the land of peace; but still, when I think of that happy home, it must have been a great struggle to her to leave it. She had her troubles in the world; her husband's loss bowed her to the ground; and yet there was much to bind her to the world. Though she was most unworldly, yet there is that in the world which had its charms. How happy was she in her home; the very holiness and seriousness of her children made her glad; I have seen her eye glisten with a most pure delight when she has seen her son call in the labouring men to evening prayer, or when he has gone out on Sunday morning to teach in the Sunday-school; then she was happy in doing good to her poorer neighbours; she liked to sit in their cottages and to read to those who were blind or ill; these were her pleasures; and to leave this scene of usefulness, these holy pleasures, this holy home, must have been a struggle even though she has now found a better home and still higher joys.

Such thoughts passed through the rector's mind as he walked home. The bells were now ringing for morning church; the children were just issuing *two by two* from the porch of the school; the sun was bright; the grass in the

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churchyard glistened with the frost ; the villagers were coming forth from their cottages with their bibles and prayer-books in their hands, and there were signs of a good company of worshippers flocking to the house of prayer. Greatly did the rector feel the services of that day ; he had so lately witnessed a holy death that his soul was in tune for prayer, and he felt the need of heavenly strength both for himself and for his flock, that both he and they might learn to meet their end. It so happened that his sermon bore on the very subject which had filled his mind as he walked home from the farm, and as it fits the day, I will now tell you what he said :—

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We all love life ; we cling to life ; like Hezekiah, of whom we read in this afternoon's first Lesson, we are loath to leave our accustomed home and to go forth through the valley of the shadow of death into an unknown and unseen world ; we are ready like that king of old to weep sore, when we think of our latter end being near, and of leaving all things here. There are but a few who in reality "desire to depart." Even though we have many troubles to go through on earth, *yet we are bound to it with many ties ; though the clouds darken and sadden the scene at times,*

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there is enough of sunshine to make us love the world. It requires a great and fearful struggle with ourselves to be content to go hence.

And I am not speaking of great sinners, who of course dread the very mention of death, and have need to dread it; we can understand their shrinking from death, their love of the world, and the eager way in which they cling and cleave to it. They have not only no hope beyond, but they feel a certainty of torment; they know in some sort how terrible the exchange would be, if they were to be cut off in the midst of their sins; they cannot bear the thought of the resurrection, or the judgment, or the life to come, because they are conscious of being utterly unfit and unprepared. God's Word shews them a fearful doom, and they have cause enough to wish to stay here, yea, to abide here, if it were possible, for ever. I am not speaking of them; theirs is a plain case; but I am speaking rather of men in a better spiritual state, of men who have some fear of God, some care for the things of God; of these I say that they love life. As it was with Hezekiah, who could call God to witness that he had not despised Him, that he had walked before Him in truth and a perfect heart, that he had done

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that which is good, so it is with us now; we have a natural unwillingness to leave our earthly house, a strong wish to stay here, and much sorrow of spirit when we think earnestly of death. And the truth is, that there is beyond doubt much to bind us to the world, much to bind even the good to the world, notwithstanding its temptations, its evils, and its trials; there is much of innocent pleasure and peace and sober-minded joy to be found here. Yes, we can, so to speak, enjoy God in some measure on earth; we can enjoy His works, His gifts, the manifold signs of His presence. God is here; His love meets us at every turn; His mercy embraces us on every side; we live amid remains of paradise; and though we say that the world is paradise in ruins, yet beautiful are the ruins; all is not gone; God has not given over the world to briers and thorns and ravenous beasts. Only consider how much of beauty is left, how much which good men may enjoy. Our eyes, our senses are constantly refreshed and cheered with the things which God does, the things which we can gaze upon not only without sin but with godly profit. Sometimes the world seems to sing with joy, as in the time of spring, when the trees seem to be glad and the warm sun makes all things bright,

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and the fresh green breaks out on every bough, when the music of the birds begins again, and thousands of insects are on the wing. Let a good man walk out into the fields on a fine spring day, and surely he will find enough to make him rejoice as he discerns the finger of God's love and power in all. Or look at the earth at a later season, when the valleys laugh with corn, and the golden crops wave in the fields, when there is the joy of harvest, and we see men thankfully gathering in the gifts of God. All is not marred and spoilt; God has spared much to delight the heart of the sons of men; as we walk through the world we can find much to make us delight in it in a good and guileless way; there is the scent of Eden lingering in it yet; though the fences are broken down, something of the Garden yet remains; it is not quite laid bare, nor has the wrath of God so fallen upon it as to wither up all that was fair and sweet; desolation has not blackened the whole scene, nor is the whole world, fallen as it is, blighted like the bare withered plain of the accursed cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Though amid flowers and green meadows, birds and waving woods, we see death at work, and become convinced of the presence of death and sin, yet we also see the handywork and pre-



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sence of a loving God, the shining traces of divine goodness imprinted everywhere on the earth.

Or if we pass from these things to mankind, to men as they are, while we are concluded under sin, and every man has the blight in his soul, yet how much can we rejoice in each other, and rejoice without sin. Are there not happy homes and cheerful firesides, and family affections and true friendship, which indeed light up our earthly life, and cause us to love the place in which we have found these things? Home pleasures are graciously allowed us here, and we here learn that love of one another, that joy in one another, that happiness in each other's sight which we hope will be perfected in the world above. Even when all is bleak without, as at this time, and the outward world is chilled by winter's frost and rains, we can find joy at home; there the laughter and mirth of children, kind intercourse with our friends and kindred, cause our hearts to rejoice, and we feel that God has given us a large measure of innocent delights in the place of our trial, in the world which we must leave.

Or take our acts of faith towards God, our religious service, the religious portion of our life, surely in confessing God on earth and in doing *His will*, no slight joy is to be obtained. When

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we kneel down in prayer, when we bless Him for all the mercies that we daily receive from His loving hands, when we draw near to Him whether at home or in His house, when we sing sweet psalms, when we study His Holy Word, when we think upon His angels, when we succour the needy and distressed and do good out of our love to Christ, in all these acts of faith, of love, of thankfulness, of praise, our soul does find joy. Though we are on earth, the hearts of them rejoice that seek the Lord; greatly can we delight in our service of God; we can joy in the Holy Ghost; we can contemplate all the marvellous love of the Father in giving His dear Son to death, of the Son in suffering for our sins, of the Holy Ghost in dwelling among us and leading us to what is good.

Here then I say are abundant bonds and ties to fasten us to this present world, to make us loath to give up our accustomed place on earth. In times of sorrow we may be willing to let the stakes of our tent be pulled up, and are ready to move on to another world; but we have so many days of harmless joy mixed and interwoven with the darker threads of life, that the natural heart clings to its old haunts, and dreads to hear the words "Get thee hence, to a land that I will *shew thee*." Who could live many

years on earth and without a sigh give all up? Even our purest affections in one sense help to rivet us to the world. Though we should know by an express revelation of the Spirit that we should pass into heaven's joy, yet we could not leave home, brethren, friends and companions, all the familiar faces, our house of prayer, without a struggle. We must have formed attachments here : he that could live for many years in a place, and leave it even for a place without any sorrow or heaviness, he whose heart has got wound round nothing, but is loose and free from all bonds, would seem to have no kindly nature, no love, no warmth of soul. We know often that those who are forced by actual distress and want to leave their native land, and whose memories are filled with the hardships that they have borne, mostly sorrow when the time of departure really comes ; forgetting all their suffering in their attachment to their father-land, the land where they were born, and where it may be they have nourished children, they are wont to weep upon the shore. Though they go to find a home in better lands, where the horn of plenty shall pour its good things into their laps, and where want never will be known, yet it costs no little pang, no little struggle to depart. In like manner though we may see better

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lands and a better home opened out to us above by the love of Christ, it is a trial, it is a struggle to flesh and blood to leave our earthly habitation, to leave the shore of this present world, and to embark for our new and abiding home.

But if it is natural to have sorrow in leaving this the only state in which we ever lived, if naturally we incline like good Hezekiah to weep sore when we are threatened with death, should we not therefore strive to increase our faith in the promises of Christ? It is thus only that we can be reconciled to death; it is thus only that we can gain heart to bear the hour of leave-taking; for thus only can we hope to *gain* by dying. To him that is in Christ, "to die is gain," to die is to exchange an earthly for a heavenly world, to taste instead of this mixed cup of sweet and bitter, the eternal sweetness of the cup of God; while we may not leave this earthly scene without some grief, yet the bright prospect of a glorious immortality, through our Lord Jesus Christ, will support our spirits in the hour of death. It is indeed by faith, faith shewn in a holy life, that the saints have got beyond Hezekiah, and have even wished to depart; they have been enabled to snap asunder the bonds that bound *them* to the world; they have had

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heart to leave all things here, spring and autumn, the fair world, their happy homes, their old haunts and old friends; they have so seen with the soul the glories of the new home, that all here has seemed dull and pale; they have been ready to take wing, that they might be transported into the joy of God's presence; they have gone forth gladly to be with Christ in the land of everlasting life. By faith we may weaken and overcome our natural unwillingness to depart hence; more and more of heaven will break upon us while we are here, and our grasp of the world will become loosened as our faith brightens and grows strong; and though we may never reach the point of wishing and longing to depart, we may be able with a spirit of holy resignation to meet our end, hoping for a glorious change, and not sorrowing over much to let the curtain drop for ever on our earthly life, and the whole scene of earthly things pass for ever from our eyes.

But of the wicked, the careless, the impenitent, the lovers of the world, in the evil sense of that word, what can be said? Alas, to them it must be terrible to die; they may well weep sore and lament and howl; terrible is death to the foolish and the unholy. No hope have they *beyond the world*. What are the promises of

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rist to them who despise Christ? To what comfort can they fly? What reed or straw can they catch at as they sink? What can their souls cling to, to support them, to console them, to encourage them? Before them is the blackness darkness for ever; they may well cry "let us die, let us live;" they may well wish to push death from the door or to break the dreaded barrier; they may well try to hold fast the world, for in the world only can they find any joy. All dark without; to die is like going out of a cheerful home into a wild black wilderness in the midst of storms. "O that I could live here for ever," they may well exclaim; "O that there were no death, and nothing after death!" yet onward they are driven; onward they are hurried by the irresistible hand of time; onward they are pressed towards the valley of the shadow of death. When the wicked and the unrepenting die, they die indeed; it is death indeed, with the full terrors of death; then all joy is lost eternally; they have tasted the last of pleasure; it is henceforth utterly at an end; they leave homes and kindred, the fresh air and pleasant fields, the sunshine and bright skies, all that delights man's heart on earth; and as the eye closes on a world that has *so much that is bright*, they are swept

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into the regions of another world where all is darkness and agony and despair.

O ye careless ones, ye who live in sin and despise God your Saviour, let not the day of death come upon you unawares. Weep now over your sins ; weep now at the foot of the cross ; weep sore for the despite you have done to the Spirit of grace ; repent at once while you have time, lest the darkness come upon you ; rouse yourselves from your dangerous sleep ; separate yourselves from evil friends and evil ways, and from your own evil selves ; seek a new heart, and a new spirit, and a new self, and new friends, and new ways, that you may live and not die. Cast off your transgressions ; take a bold course ; make a great change ; and pray for great help from the Holy Ghost that you may be turned. Bitter beyond all words will be the day of your death, bitter will be the hour of your departing, unless you repent : your whole soul will weep sore, when the voice of God says, "Thou shalt die ;" your whole soul will shudder as you find yourselves passing out of the world without power to resist, without power to stay, helpless, hopeless, the objects of God's just vengeance.

Thanks be to God, there is yet time to repent ; there is time to turn to God ; there is time to *forsake* sin, for the end is not yet ; God has not

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yet sent us the message of death ; we are alive now ; our lives have been spared through many foolish and evil days ; many a time has God been provoked to cut us down ; many a time has He pitied us when we deserved His wrath ; He has borne with us ; He has shewn mercy ; He has given us space for repentance ; He has called us in many ways to the cross ; we have all had our warnings ; we all know that God has pleaded with us. And now this very time pleads with us ; the year is as it were on its death-bed now, and it speaks to us like a dying friend ; it is about to be numbered among the things past ; it will soon be gone ; the flame flickers in the socket ; the lamp is all but burnt out, the oil spent ; there are just a few hours of lingering light, and then we shall have passed a great stage of life ; the sand of the glass will have run out soon ; only a few grains, a few fragments of the feast are left ; we are on the very edge and border of a new year ; we shall soon have crossed the threshold.

And has not time an eloquent and stirring tongue ? Can we let a year slip from our hands without thought ? Are we to hurry with light feet across such a boundary ? Are we to dance on with frivolous minds ? Nay, there is a voice now that says to us on this most solemn day, “ Set thine house in order.” Listen to that voice ; hear it



with your hearts ; before another year comes you may be gone ; you may have been taken from your pleasant home, your families, your friends, your earthly occupations ; see then how you stand with God ; see how you feel towards the world, and worldly things ; take heed lest you be not too loath to depart, too much bent on staying here, too fond of earthly things. Cast your thoughts forward ; look into eternity ; think of the time when there will be no new-years, nor old years, nor years at all ; think what you are doing to prepare yourselves for eternal life. " Man is appointed unto man once to die ; " " thou shalt die and not live," is said to every man in his turn ; it will be said to you. Look before you, be not unprepared ; set your life in order ; above all pray the new year in ; pray for forgiveness of past sin, and for strength to live a holier, a better, a more crucified and Christian life, that you may be able without regret to rise up from your earthly seat, and say of your earthly life, " it is finished," with reasonable expectation of beginning a more glorious life above, through the merits of our Jesus Christ.

## acts for the Christian Seasons.

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### THE CIRCUMCISION.

*The Name of Jesus.*

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**PER LESSONS:** *Morning*, 1st. Gen. xvii. ; 2nd. Rom. ii. ; *Evening*, 1st. Deut. x. ver. 12 ; 2nd. Colos. ii. **EPISTLE**, Rom. iv. 8. **GOSPEL**, St. Luke ii. 15.

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OUR Saviour compares the Church on earth, which He calls "the kingdom of heaven," to a city which is gathered of every kind, both good and bad. We see the truth of this likeness every day among ourselves. Good and bad are mixed together and stand side by side ; men and women who are neighbours are very different the one from the other ; every town, every village is a patchwork of men, of different hues and different colours ; or it is like the path in a wood on a sunny day, which is striped and chequered with gleams of light and by dark shadows. Take a single street of any town or village, of what different parts it is composed ! In this house men are drinking, in the next they are praying, in the next slaving for money, in the next dancing and giving themselves to frivolous pleasures : here is a *religious family*, there a *worldly family* ;

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here is a man all for politics, there a man all for the world to come; here are young persons fond of dress and show and great acquaintances, there are young persons fond of the house of prayer of giving alms, of visiting the sick and poor. In one house Christ is Lord indeed, in another the world is lord. In this house the inmates are talking about their neighbours, gossiping, hearing tales or telling tales, interested in all the idle news of the place, and very eager about their neighbours' concerns; in the next, they are reading some good books, or considering the best way of relieving the poor widow one of their number has just been to see, or they are practising the psalms for church, or making some warm clothes for the poor, as the frost is sharp and the winter brings its duties.

Such is the Church on earth; wherever we may go, good and bad are close to each other; the faithful and the unfaithful, the hardened and the repentant, the gay and the grave, the frivolous and the serious, the worldly and the unworldly, are mixed together in the same place. Prayers, oaths, quarrels, almsdeeds, jealousies, acts of love, light songs, hymns and psalms, back-bitings, words of charity, sharp dealings, *generous* dealings; all these opposite things are

issuing forth from the hearts and tongues of neighbours inhabiting the same spot.

Now the little town of Holmesley was just in this state ; it had its good men and its bad, its faithful members of the Church, and its careless ones. Look, for instance, at those two houses at the end of the main street ; one, you see, is a good substantial red brick house, large, roomy, freshly painted, with bright curtains, a well-polished brass knocker on the door, a great dog lying on the steps, a coach-house on one side, with a good garden behind, and an air of prosperity about the whole. That house is Mr. Flack's, a retired tradesman of the place, who has made some money ; or rather, he ended by being something between tradesman and merchant, and when his family speak of business at all, they invariably speak of "the merchant." The next house is somewhat humbler ; it is neat, quiet-looking, in good order ; there is no air of prosperity, no appearance of narrow means ; altogether you would say that it was occupied by "a quiet family." That house is Mr. Landon's, a retired grocer of the place, who has given his business to his son, and never pretends to be more than a tradesman, and never is ashamed of "the shop."

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The two families, though living side by side, are as opposite as possible in their ways of life. The Flacks are all for gaiety; for getting higher in the world, for edging and pushing themselves into the society of those above them, for gradually dropping all knowledge of those whom they knew in their shop-keeping days. Great are the struggles of the Miss Flacks to scrape acquaintances with any of a higher grade than themselves; theirs is an anxious, eager, restless attempt to get upward in life. Not so the Landons; they keep all their old friends, and their best friends are among the poor; in the back streets and narrow alleys of the town, among the destitute and distressed, the Miss Landons are to be found. What the Flacks spend in parties and dress, they spend in alms and works of Christian love. In short, the one family is of the world; the other are earnest members of Christ's Church, and their whole life is given up to His service.

Just look at the two to-day, as it is new-year's eve. There is a great bustle going on at the Flacks; the Miss Flacks are skurrying to and fro, popping in and popping out, hurrying to the milliner's and the confectioner's, and evidently in *a high state of excitement*. You may see men

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carrying benches and chairs into their house, and a great many good things in trays and baskets are going down the kitchen steps. Something is going on. The truth is the Flacks give a great dance; they think it the thing to dance the new year in; they "have no idea of being dull and moping at such a time, like the Landons; to dance the new year in is the proper thing;" thus talk the Flacks; they are expecting several grand acquaintances; and it is to be the gayest ball seen for many a day in the quiet town of Holmesley.

Now the Landons, whose hearts are fixed on better things, who act as if they had to die and to be judged, when "the mirth of tabrets" shall cease, have been accustomed to look upon the end of one year and the beginning of another as a very solemn and affecting time, as a time warning them of the shortness of life, of the coming of Christ's judgment, of the end of all things. Accordingly, while their neighbours the Flacks are bustling about in the pursuit of the pomps and vanities of this life, the Landons are searching into their hearts and consciences; in their own chambers they are repenting of their sins, offering up fervent prayer for grace that they may live more closely with God. A thin wall

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divides the two houses ; yet what a difference between the two ! The one is full of dainties, rich dresses, the bustle of the coming gaiety ; the other is all repose, sanctified by prayer. As the night draws on, the bustle of the one increases, carriages rattle up to the door one after the other and dash away again ; the brass knocker gives a continual thunder through the streets ; lights flash from every room ; music and the movement of feet, and many voices give forth a confused sound ; the revel rises in mirth and excitement as the hours fly ; and as the clock strikes that ushers in the new year the gaiety is at a feverish height, the new year is danced in, and the increased mirth seems to say that the revellers rejoice to get rid of a year of their short life.

Now a little before twelve o'clock the door of the Landons' house is opened and the whole family came forth ; they do not turn towards the Flacks' house, but walk the other way ; in short, they take the road to the church, the house of prayer. With calm, thankful, peaceful hearts, they hasten to the house of God, rejoicing in the privilege lately given to the town by the clergyman of a service on new-year's eve. Several *persons*, some from the back streets, some from

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the shops, and some from the wealthier parts of the town, are going the same way. It is a fine bright starry night, with a keen frosty air. On they walk till they come to the church, and as they enter they are evidently struck with its great solemnity; the body of the church and chancel shine with many lights, but the roof above is dusky and dim from its height, while the pillars between the aisles look so stern and massive, and the more distant parts of the church lie shrouded in a mysterious gloom.

A considerable congregation is assembled and all employed in secret prayer; there is an awful and holy stillness, all seem to be touched by the place and by the hour; the presence of God is clearly felt by those midnight worshippers, and one could not but think that those breathings of many hearts make the true way for a year to end. "This," I exclaimed to myself, "is to act as men that keep watch for their Lord; this is a scene that God and His angels love to look at; this is an act which these worshippers will not be ashamed to account for at the last great day." A strange solemn joy filled my heart, and I could not but think how poor, how weak and wretched, are all the joys, and gaieties, and racketings of the world, *compared* with the sublime satisfaction



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of offering the soul to God. As the clock struck twelve all were on their knees; the new year was literally prayed in; the service then begins; many voices rise in that house of prayer; and as the psalms are chanted by a large choir of tradesmen and others who fill the chancel as a voluntary and unpaid choir, who can describe the effect?

The sermon, delivered with a holy earnestness which heightened its effect, was in these words.

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Our Saviour was on this day circumcised, and on this day was given to Him that Name which reveals His unspeakable love towards man, which we should never mention, never suffer to pass our lips, never dwell upon in our minds, without deepest thoughts of love; it is that Name which is above every Name, at which every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth. Most wonderful, most marvellous, most blessed Name of Jesus! Thus, O Everlasting Son of God, hast Thou allowed us, thus hast Thou bidden us to call Thee; Thou art our Jesus, our Healer, our Saviour! There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we can be saved; there is no other Saviour, none other in whom we can trust for salvation, none other who has power to save, none

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other to whom we could truly give that Name, none other who could snatch our souls and bodies out of the devil's hand.

Christ is indeed our only Saviour; to Him only does that glorious Name belong; no angel, no archangel, not all the angels, could save a single soul from hell; however they may be used by God in the work of succouring and guarding souls, they have no power to buy off our souls, to pay a ransom, to make an atonement, to wash out sin, to reverse the sentence of everlasting death, to open the kingdom of heaven, to unlock the door of glory for the sons of men. There is but one Jesus, but one Deliverer, but one Sacrifice for sin, one Redeemer, who has bought us and been able to buy us with a price. Above all angels in His own Divine nature, He "was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death," that He might "taste death for every man," suffer in every man's stead, and thus buy every man, pay for every man by His own most precious blood. None else could do this but He; no other blood would have been equal to such a purchase, or had such value with God as to be worth more than all the souls of all mankind. When He was circumcised the first drops of that blood were shed, the first drops

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of that bloody shower which afterwards poured down in all its purifying fulness from the cross. When the Name of Jesus was given to Him, the blood began to flow ; though Himself pure and without sin, He then shewed that without blood no covenant could be made with God ; indeed all the blood, whether of men at the time of Circumcision, or of bulls and of goats, was only a kind of picture or prophecy of His blood-shedding.

As concerns this Name of Jesus, remember that it was brought by an angel from heaven ; it was not given to our Lord by the mind or will of men ; it was not given as we of our own will give our children their names. Mary the blessed Virgin did not choose it, nor yet Joseph, nor any of their kindred ; as in the case of John Baptist it was the Name which God chose. If you recollect, when Zacharias the father of St. John was in the Temple, “ there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias : for thy prayer is heard ; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, *and thou shalt call his name John.*” And so again with the blessed Mary, *when an angel came and said, “ Hail, thou that*

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most highly favoured, the Lord is with thee : blessed art thou among women," "she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind that manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His Name JESUS." And what He was called, that in truth He was, that He is ; He was called Jesus ; He is Jesus our Saviour ; the Name declares His office towards the world ; it is full of truth ; it came from God ; it describes what our Lord has done for us and is about to do ; it is that true title which the whole Church throughout the world utters with deepest joy ; we lift up our hearts on high, and whensoever prayer goes up, it is offered through God the Father as our Saviour, and we plead through Him ; the Name of Jesus millions of souls kneel down and feel that prayer is thus effectual ; they doubt not, yea, they confidently believe that it is heard in heaven, that it reaches the heavenly throne, that it finds acceptance with God by the power of that Name.

Great then is this feast of the Circumcision, not only as setting forth Christ's obedience to the Law, but as commemorating the time when

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that most blessed Name was first bestowed upon our Lord. He was then crowned, so to speak, with that Name, which proclaimed His mission, His work, His warfare, His future victory over hell and death ; which led Him to His crown of thorns, His cross, His grave, out of His grave, into heaven again, as the great Conqueror : all earthly victories, which the loudest trumpets of earthly fame most celebrate, are but faint types of that His wonderful, His marvellous, His unspeakable victory ; all acts of deliverance are but faint types of that salvation which He wrought with His own right hand and His mighty arm ; and it was as on this day when He took the Name, that He put His hand especially to the office of saving men ; He was then bound to the war ; it was His act of enlistment as the Captain of our salvation ; and though many years passed before He went forth to preach His Gospel and to work His mighty works, yet He then, by His Name, declared His future work.

Now while we consider at this time Christ's love, Christ's labour of love, Christ's work of redemption, as continually expressed to us in His Name, shall we not consider the service, the love, the labours due to Him ? What, I ask, is due to *such a Saviour*, to the Author, not of a few years

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release from pain and sorrow, but of eternal salvation? What does He require of us, whom He has bought and paid for by His blood? What should we give of our own free-will in return for His love? These are great questions, questions not to be put aside, but pressing themselves upon us to-day, crying out for an answer with urgent tones. See what our Lord has done to save; see what He has suffered; see what it cost Him to redeem souls from death; trace His course from the day when He took the Name of Jesus to the day when His sufferings were finished upon the cross: only weigh all those toils and agonies of this blessed Lord; put them before your mind; and then judge whether it can possibly be enough for us to say, "Lord, Lord," to utter a few phrases about His love and our sin, to be but cold formal followers, wearing His Name without wearing His cross, and expecting the gift of eternal salvation to drop into our laps as we sit basking in the world?

Nay, nay; no words of love, no profession of faith, no mere talking about sin, will serve us; we have our work to do towards Christ, as Christ had His towards us; as He loved us, so must we love Him and one another; it must not be all deeds on His *side*, all words on ours; all fruit

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from Him, all leaves from us ; blood from Him, and barren speeches from us ; there must be some likeness between our kind of love and His. As He wore His cross for us, so must we wear His cross to prove ourselves His followers ; no idlers, no triflers, no mere talkers will have their release on His great day. Do you think the mere mention of Christ's Name will unlock the door of heaven ? Are we to go on just as we like, in careless worldly ways, loving the world, serving the world, enjoying the world, and are we then to fling off all our sins hurriedly upon our Lord when death comes, as though He would take the burden ? I say this will not do ; the Name of Jesus is no passport into heaven ; there must be, not a putting on of His Name, but a putting on of Christ Himself ; yes, and a putting off of the old man with his deeds ; and not only a putting off, but a rending off, a cutting off, a circumcision, a flinging off of all worldly affections, all worldly appetites, lusts, follies, tastes, pleasures ; all must go ; all must be got rid of ; we must take the knife and cut off all that is contrary to Christ ; no half measures will do, no patching up of the wound, no compromise ; a thorough work must be done, thorough abandonment of all known sin, a *thorough* acceptance of all known duties ; the

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whole heart, the whole soul, the whole body, flesh, spirit, thoughts, desires, the whole man, must be given to Christ. Each man must throw himself into Christ's hands as "a living sacrifice," as Christ was for each a bloody Sacrifice.

Whatever our sins or leanings to sin may be, we must deal boldly with them; make no peace, allow no delays, hear no whispers of self-deceit; off with all, right hand, or right eye; nothing must be held back, and to save something we must not lose all. "Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ depart from iniquity."

Some sins it may be hard to part with; we may like to keep the knife from them, and not to circumcise our souls upon those points; we are apt to have our favourite sins; one has a passion for pleasure, another for dress, another for money, another for praise; one is selfish, another irritable, another slothful, or proud, or fond of good living, or ambitious. And it is hard for those who are fond of praise to shut their ears to sounds of praise; it is hard for those who are fond of good cheer, good living, good meals, to cut off their dainties, to thwart their palate, to mortify their taste, to come down to a simpler mode of living; it is *hard for those who are irritable to check*



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feelings of anger or impatience. But what is hard is not impossible; "My grace is sufficient for thee," says God. The question in plain words is this: do we choose to be lost, to be cast out among the accursed, for the sake of these favourite sins? Shall we in these points remain uncircumcised and perish in consequence? Are all the feasts, all the merry-makings, all the rich fare and dainty meats, to be cut off? Or are *we* to be cut off? That is the question to be settled. Will our gay dresses, our fashionable apparel, our fine clothes, profit us when we stand before God? What will our savings or scrapings do, all our money hoarded up, our silver and gold; can we carry them with us and buy ourselves off from hell?

However hard it may be to cut off and circumcise ourselves of some evil habits and evil passions, those evil habits and evil passions must, by God's help, be given up, if we would escape the damnation of hell. Christ had His crucifying; we must have ours: we "have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Christ did not purchase salvation on easy terms, and in easy ways we cannot prove our faith in Him, or render Him that hearty service which is due. Do not then draw back and say that it is a hard *thing to get* quit of sin; for we all know it is a

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hard thing to be saved. Rather put your shoulder to the wheel; fight bravely against your evil self; cut out your evil parts and cast them from you; be circumcised in heart with the true circumcision of the Spirit: the Spirit of grace will aid you in the work of self-mortification. Give not up the work of overcoming the devil or the flesh the moment that they put forth strength; but grapple with them in Christ's Name, and put on the whole armour of God, that you may stand in the evil day. To give up the task of overcoming sin in your members is to give up Christ, to give up Christ is to give up heaven, to give up heaven is to choose hell.

And shall we not this day set ourselves with fresh earnestness to the work which our Lord has laid upon us? Shall we not rouse ourselves and start afresh, with new heart, with new zeal, with new resolves? A new year opens upon us; we step forward on a new stage of our life; the day speaks to us; we are called to newness of life; we should not go pacing on last year's level whatever it may be; there should be a rise now, a mounting higher, a marked ascent; we should struggle upwards and leave the poisonous valleys of the world more and more behind. Let all rise up, *all ascend, all reach forth their souls to-*

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wards the heights above. Are any of us to remain where we have been wont to tread? Nay, the day cries out to us; let each man take a higher step, each a bolder stride, each press forward to a higher mark, leaving old things behind, separating himself with a resolute heart from all that has clogged his steps of old. Let the careless become careful now, the careful more careful still; let the wicked forsake his sin, and the godly advance in godliness, let the lover of the world give up the world, and he who has given it up, give it up still more heartily, still more cheerfully; let all advance.

A new year is not lightly to be begun; it is a solemn time; it bids Christ's soldiers as with a trumpet to start afresh in the ways of Christ; it calls us to a fiercer and more momentous fight; for it tells us that the field of warfare is lessened, the time of warfare shortened, so that we must come closer still to our foe, and fight as men on whom night's shadows are about to fall, and all to be lost or won before the sun goes down. Our life is shorter; we have made a stride in life; the years move quickly on; we must no longer idle in the world, but with a new heart and a new spirit enter upon the new *year*.

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By the love of this blessed Jesus, by the mercies of Jesus Christ, by His toils, His sufferings, His pains of death, I pray you to amend your ways; be severe, be unsparing towards yourselves, be not almost but altogether Christ's; do not almost but altogether forsake your sins. What would it be to have a Saviour, and yet not to be numbered among the saved! to have a Saviour, and yet to perish! to be called Christ's in this world, and to be separated from Him forever! to wear His Name now, but to hear Him say hereafter, "I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity!"

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### COLLECT.

ALMIGHTY God, who madest Thy blessed  
to be circumcised, and obedient to the law  
man ; grant us the true circumcision of  
Spirit ; that our hearts, and all our memb  
being mortified from all worldly and carnal lu  
we may in all things obey Thy blessed w  
through the same Thy Son Jesus Christ  
Lord. AMEN.

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.

# Tracts for the Christian Seasons.

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## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

### *Christ's Presence in Public Worship.*

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PROPER LESSONS: *Morning*, Isaiah xli. ; *Evening*, Isaiah xliii.

EPISTLE, Gal. iv. 1. GOSPEL, St. Matt. i. 18.

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CHRISTIAN reader, have you ever looked, thoughtfully and reverently, at a picture of that glad event, of which our hearts have been for days past so full, the birth of Christ? I doubt not that you have; for it is a subject which the greatest painters have delighted to represent; and I cannot think that a Christian could ever look upon such a solemn scene thoughtlessly or irreverently. If then you have, I desire to learn from you what impression such contemplation made upon you. Very much, of course, would depend on what would be called the treatment of the subject, and the thoughts with which the painter's mind were filled; and these must be very various. But yet all the great masters of the art of painting have drunk in their inspiration, more or less directly, from the same fountain, even God's Blessed Book, and though in lesser matters

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there may be variety, still on the whole, I think, there is always a striking resemblance between them all. Now to help you in answering my question, let me try to describe or to paint in words and sentences the idea that my own mind has gathered from those pictures with which I myself have been most familiar. I think then my own memory will furnish some such scene as this.

It is the stable of a village inn, in an Eastern land; yet not, as is usual amongst ourselves, a building raised by man, but a cave hollowed out of the solid rock, the walls rugged and roughly hewn, as though at the smallest exercise of toil. Gloomy and dark it is, so that we can scarcely at first discern who its tenants are, save where a bright beam of light streams through an opening from above, upon a group which occupies the central space. And yet the very darkness all around makes the brightness that falls here the more conspicuous, so that our thoughts are chained to that which is here presented to them. To the left on a low stone seat rests an aged man, whose features bear the marks of wonder, now passing away into the calm of settled awe. Beside him but a few steps off stands one, who we should say *at once* was a young mother bending with the

tenderness and love which such alone can feel, over her firstborn child ; did not that gentle face tell of other thoughts within, of which we know not how they could have place at such a time. There is not the buoyant gladness which rejoices that a man is born into the world, but deep and anxious thought ; we had almost said resignation, as though what was seen by the outward eye revealed not all, as there was some secret mystery behind which forbids all excess of even present joy.

But full on the new-born Infant streams the light of heaven. The dark shadows fall on the old man's figure and the mother's too ; but very brightly is lit up the Babe that lies on yon bed of hay. No other pillow has He. His cradle is a manger ; behind which stand, meekly waiting, the ox and the ass whom such an unwonted Visitor has driven from their accustomed feeding-place. We look again and again at the Holy Child, for we discern in Him marks of something not of this world ; love, wisdom, and goodness, such as a mere child of Adam never shewed. But I have not yet made the whole group perfect. Before the Infant's bed of stone kneel with their faces to the ground in silent adoration, *men of mean outward estate, whom,*



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from their dress and bearing, we guess to be shepherds of the neighbouring plains. One is bowed down very low, while another lifts up his head for a moment as though to gaze on Him, whom all are so humbly worshipping; one and all have given up their hearts to adore the great mystery they behold. And still again, it may be, above where lies the Divine Child, seen by us through the painter's skill, but unseen by those who are present there, we behold a part of that multitude of the heavenly host, who first made the glad tidings known, and who now themselves are contemplating what they have brought the shepherds to adore.

Somewhat such as this has been, I will suppose, the picture of that holy scene, the nativity of our Lord and Saviour. I ask you then, Christian reader, what feelings have been called forth in your heart as you have looked upon some such representation of this great event as I have tried to describe. I will tell you, or at least give utterance to thoughts, which I believe must have place within you. You praise God, I doubt not, for the great mystery of godliness, for the boundless love which spared not an only Son; you are humbled within yourself at man's sinfulness which no less a sacrifice than this could

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suffice to do away, you truly feel this, and more : but the absorbing desire of your heart is to *adore* Him, who lies in seeming helplessness before you : you *worship* Him, whom you know to be " God manifest in the flesh : " you rejoice with awe at His presence, thus pictured to you, and you almost envy those to whom it was permitted to see in reality what you see only in representation : you take the shepherds' feelings to yourself, long to give them expression by word and gesture as could they.

Now, if you will have patience with me, I will ask you another question before I go on to that which, strictly speaking, I mean to be the subject of the present Tract. I have tried to make you realize the feelings that would be naturally suggested by a holy and reverent picture of the birth of Christ. Let me follow the same train of enquiry, and put such a question as before, not this time with reference to a representation of our Lord's birth, but of another solemn event which the Church soon brings before us. I mean, Christ's Epiphany, that is, His shewing to the Gentiles, when, as you know, rich and learned kings were brought by the leading of a star from their homes in a distant land, perhaps to the *same mean stable at Bethlehem*, to worship the

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new-born Child whom they had been taught to know as "king of the Jews."

This is a scene, which like His nativity, great painters of every age have devoted their best talents to represent, and they have done it somewhat thus.

The Holy Child, now a Babe of twelve days old, lies not as before in the manger of the inn, but with arms outstretched in somewhat of childish playfulness in His mother's lap. Above Him shines bright the wondrous star which has been the herald of His birth, shedding upon Him a brilliant flood of light, and declaring Him beyond mistake to be Him whom the strangers seek. As king of the Jews, the wise men draw near to Him. Before Him bow the dark sons of the East, paying a homage which as yet they have been wont to receive, while slaves obediently unfold the treasures which they have brought as meet tribute to Him, whom they are come to honour. Gold, and frankincense, and myrrh they offer in their hands or lay humbly at His mother's feet, while their looks of adoration declare how rich reward they deem the present hour, for all the toils and dangers of their long and weary way.

*And here again, as we gaze upon some such*

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scene as this, do not our hearts burn within us with the same deep feelings as before? We long to *worship*, we desire to cast ourselves down, "ourselves, our souls and bodies," as the wise men their treasures, at our Saviour's feet. We think that we would have toiled with them over the burning deserts to have reaped but a measure of their reward. Our hearts catch their spirit of adoration, and we inwardly worship the Holy One whom they outwardly honoured.

I shall be glad to think that I have in this way fairly drawn from these two great events a common subject, of which to speak more fully; for this Second Sunday after Christmas is, as it were, a sort of shifting ground between the ebbing and flowing tides of Christmas and Epiphany; one year the stream of Christmas joy flows over it, and another, it is swallowed up in the gladness of Epiphany. And therefore I have chosen for our consideration a subject that borrows from the riches of both these seasons, hoping thus to light the lamp of to-day's reading from the fires of gladness with which each holy time in common glows. And this it will be my aim to do, by trying my best to teach you how Christians of the present age are not altogether without that *glorious* privilege which our hearts

have, I trust, yearned to share with Jews and shepherds and Gentile kings ; nay rather, how to us is vouchsafed a higher privilege than to them, who beheld with their bodily eye the incarnate God.

If then you will bear with me a little, I trust you will not think what I say strained or unreal, when I declare this privilege to be that to which Christians, alas ! often give so little heed ; the privilege, I mean, of worshipping Christ in those assemblies of His people, where He has promised to be ever really present. I shall not even speak of that most near and awful access which we have to Him, when He comes to us under the outward elements of bread and wine, so that we spiritually eat His flesh and drink His blood. I shall only dwell upon that more ordinary presence which He vouchsafes to communicate, when in obedience to His command two or three are gathered together in His name. And of this I say, that it is a more gracious communication of Himself than even the shepherds and wise men were permitted to enjoy ; it is one in which, if, Christian reader, your heart has been lifted up in sympathy with their adoration, you might satisfy those earnest cravings which their pattern has inspired.

*Let me beg you, then, to lay aside all common*

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ways of thinking and speaking hereupon, and resting only on God's teaching in His Word and Church, strive with me to reach what is the real truth in a matter of such deep importance.

There is, then, you will allow, a plain and undoubted promise of Christ's presence in those assemblings of themselves together, which Christians, taught by the Apostles, make what we call public worship; "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

But it cannot be only as God that Christ is present in His Church, when met together for the purpose of common worship; for Christ as God is present every where, and in this way His precious words would mean nothing. He is present as Christ, that is, as God made man, as the perfect Man, who came to restore human nature by joining it in His own person to the nature of God. He is present in His Church at the time of public worship, as the Son of God become the Son of man, the source of spiritual strength to that body of which He is the eternal Head. For, let us never forget, the work of man's redemption is still going on in heaven, and will not be finished till the day of judgment comes.

*Christ is now on God's right hand, still man,*

just as He was when the Apostles saw Him borne up in the clouds, and there He is perfecting the salvation of mankind. Thence is He sending forth spiritual blessings, by which every Christian is sustained and made fit for eternal life. He, our Mediator, is the true Jacob's ladder, through whom precious gifts of grace come from God to man. And this is done by means of that wonderful union which there is between Christ and His Church, of which God's Word speaks under so many striking figures, each setting forth the close and mysterious connection there is between them; the most common of all I have already spoken of, where Christ is called the Head, and the Church the body, the living frame made up of many parts and limbs. The work of man's salvation will not be complete, till the whole Church is made fit for heaven, till by the power of Christ's work wrought for and in her, she becomes "a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing," till Christ, who is God and man, has poured forth upon the members of that Church all those gifts and blessings which it is His will to pour forth, and the number of His elect is completed, the jewels of His crown made up. Now, and ever since He *ascended* up to heaven, is He interceding for

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His Church, as man, and winning for her blessings of countless value. Still is it going on, this work of grace; every day and every hour are fresh gifts being bestowed, and so the work of salvation is still being carried on; and so it ever will be, till the Church of the redeemed on earth shall be exchanged for the Church of saints made perfect in heaven.

What I would urge, then, Christian friend, is this; that it is because people lose sight of this continued work of Christ, that they come to have very faulty and deficient views of public worship. Nor is this but what was to be expected: one link imperfect in the golden chain which binds heaven and earth together, puts the whole wondrous system out of order. Unless we have true views of what Christ is doing now and ever for His Church, every thing connected with the Church becomes as a thing we do not understand. And so with public worship, for public worship is the Church's voice on earth, just as the united hymns of praise of which we read, will be the Church's voice in heaven. Men have come not to know what this really is, from losing sight of the foundation on which it rests, I mean, the unceasing work which Christ still carries on for His Church. Nor is it hard to see how this



has come to pass. We have forgotten that Christ is now doing any thing for His Church; we speak and think of the redemption as something long ago completed; and so those acts of the Church which are all dependent on this work of Christ's lose their true character, and we are obliged to find some other object and meaning in them, that they may have any reality at all.

Public worship, then, as I said, is the Church's voice when assembled in the strength of her Divine Head, and claiming an interest in that gracious work which He is still carrying on for her. When we meet together in God's house, we are, each congregation, each parish, as the case may be, a little Church gathered under Christ our Head. Just as some of those beautiful many-sided shining crystals are made up of lesser crystals, each of the same form and properties as the first; break them as you will, still each fragment is the same; so as Christ is the Head of the whole Church, is He present with every company of believers, which, itself a part of the true Church, meets together in His Name. He is present with the ten or twenty worshippers in the little village church, just as He is with the *united* company which is His body. In public

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worship we come for common prayer and praise, the common hearing of God's Holy Word read and taught, but all is done in Christ. His presence is the life and soul of every assembling of ourselves together. We meet very differently from any other set of men who might come together for religious acts; we pray in Christ, our praises are offered up in Christ, God's Word is read in Christ, and the minister preaches to us in Christ. That is, all has reference to what Christ is doing for us in heaven, by the power of that blessed presence which is always with His Church, by which He is making her perfect for her home above.

Is it not then reasonable to think that this presence of Christ is the source of inestimable blessings to us? what would public worship be without it? with it, what is it not? This is what the early Christians in the cruel times, when it was a matter of life and death to be a Christian, valued as of beyond price, so that when they could not meet for worship openly for fear of human laws, they made churches for themselves under ground, amidst the burial-places of their dead, over their very bones, where they might still gather together to have Christ's presence with them. How unlike to what is the case

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amongst ourselves ! for who ever thinks now that going to church is going to meet Christ, something worth risking even life for ? And what is very commonly people's notion of the church itself, I mean the house of God in which we meet ? Do they not speak and think of it as a convenient building, in which to hear the preaching of God's minister ? Is not the common Monday question, "whom did you hear yesterday?" or "what did you think of this and that preacher?" just as if there were no Christ present, as if there were no work of redemption going on in heaven, in which the Church, gathered together in the name of her great Head, has a part ? Oh ! Christian reader, do not Christ's own words about casting pearls before swine ever come to you, when you see men flocking heedlessly to God's house, keeping not their foot, seeking amusement there as at any place of worldly resort, never giving a thought to Him who is present there, present to bless if He may, if man's perverseness will but let Him ?

On the other hand if we realize the true doctrine of Christ being present when men meet together as His disciples, how changed becomes our view of the whole matter, how differently do we regard *it*, altogether and in its sacred parts. For then

it becomes a part of that great work of which I have been speaking, Christ's mediation. Christ, I said, as other and wiser men have said before me, is the true Jacob's ladder; then the gifts and blessings He sends down on His Church from heaven are the angels coming down, the prayers and praises the Church offers up in public worship are the angels going up, both passing on their way through Him, and from Him drawing all their virtue. Our prayers we pray in Christ, we ourselves being parts of Him, and He being that God to whom we pray; and so too of our praises, He hears them, He blesses them, He accepts them, and offers them to God; the word of the Gospel of peace we hear, He is there to carry home to our inmost hearts. The reader reads before Him; the preacher preaches before Him; in His presence we hear; and by Him have power to do. All, you see, is changed from what men in their sad ignorance make it to be, a mere assembling together to be taught by preaching and edified by mutual example of devotion. It is the Church, which is Christ's bride, speaking aloud to her beloved, in the language He loves best, for it is that which He has ordained, while He vouchsafes His presence, and blesses a *hundredfold*.

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Christian reader, have I in any degree fulfilled the promise I made you of shewing to you Christians had a higher privilege than the herds had who worshipped Christ in the stable the kings who were led to Him by a star; yet such things are not so much matters of fact and writing, to be talked about and written as to be tried and felt. O "taste and see how gracious the Lord is," look out for Christ when you come to worship, open your heart to seek Him on your bended knees; then I trust you will believe my poor words, and very far more. You shall find Him, in His house, the Lord whom you seek shall come into His temple, and fill you with the blessed comforts of His presence, and when you have drunk of these, shall give you deeper draughts of His "good wine," for there is a nearer way to Him than even this, there is a Holy Communion with Him which is closer still, I mean you well know, the Sacrament of His Body and His Blood. Seek Him then first in public worship, with earnest and adoring heart, and by and by, I doubt not, He will shew unto you that "more excellent way."

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.

## ts for the Christian Seasons.

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### THE EPIPHANY.

#### *The Call of the Gentiles.*

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SEASONS : *Morning*, 1st. Isaiah lx. ; 2nd. St. Luke iii. to ver. 23 ; *Evening*,  
ch xlix. ; 2nd. John ii. to ver. 12 EPISTLE, Eph. iii. 1. GOSPEL, St.  
1.

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wise men from the east had a wondrous  
to the holy Child Jesus ; a star set them  
ir way ; on they journeyed with the gold,  
ncense and myrrh ; and when they reached  
lem again they saw the star ; a star also was  
ir souls, I mean the star of faith. On they  
yed from Jerusalem, with their eyes lifted  
heaven, that they might track the golden  
ps of this wandering star, and not miss their  
on they journeyed, till their guide “ came  
ood over where the young Child was ; ”  
oked, and it moved not, and thus without  
r language it told them they had reached  
ourney’s end ; they were now at the spot  
they were to find their treasure, the re-  
of their labours ; they had travelled far in  
nd hope, leaving their own land ; now they  
to see the great sight, the object of their

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faith and hope ; “ when they were come to the house,” over which the star stood, “ the young Child with Mary His mother.” This was He whom they came to behold ; this was He whom they had greatly desired to gaze upon ; this was He whom many prophets and kings had longed to see ; He was now revealed to their eyes, shewn to them openly ; and they stood before His face ; nay, they could not stand in His presence ; they knew who He was ; they had to discern their Lord ; they “ fell down and worshipped Him ;” they worshipped that Child ; they bowed down before Him ; they knelt before Him ; they threw themselves at His feet ; for they had found “ Immanuel ;” they had found Messiah ; they had found “ God manifest in the flesh ;” they had found the Saviour of the world, who came to save both Jew and Gentile, bond and free, and to gather them into one universal fold, one vast household of faith and family, one flock, one body, one Church.

Blessed Epiphany ! Blessed shewing forth of Christ ! How must the souls of these Galilean wise men have been overwhelmed with awe and love as they gazed upon their Lord and Saviour ! How must they have wondered in the midst of *their* worship as they considered the am-

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mystery of His birth as man who was God, the everlasting Son, by whom the heavens and earth were made, who upheld all things by His power. Blessed was their lot who were thus chosen before all other Gentiles to confess Christ. They beheld and were satisfied ; they went back to their own homes, after they had adored their Lord ; once they gazed on their Saviour ; once they saw His face, and then they returned to their own land, the words of the aged Simeon being in some sort fitted to their lips, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word : for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people ; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel."

Yes, they might well depart in peace to their own land, for they had beheld the Light that came to lighten the Gentiles ; it was enough once to have seen the Holy One, the Light of the world, the Sun of righteousness, whose light was not for one land only, but for all, that in Him all men should have life, and live by Him. They were not chosen to abide in His presence in this world, they were not called to be His Apostles, or to journey with Him through His pilgrimage of love ; this lot belonged to others ; they left their



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Lord, never more to see Him upon earth. Yet they had their mission ; it was theirs to tell in their own land the tidings of great joy ; it was theirs to shew that the Gentiles were to be drawn into Christ's fold, and to be fellow-heirs with the Jews, and to have fellowship in the Gospel ; it was theirs to fall down continually, and continually to worship Him whom they ceased to see ; their joy was once the joy of sight, thenceforward it was to be the joy of faith.

And is it not ours, who are heirs and sons of a Gentile race, to hold this day in great esteem, to honour it greatly among holy days, to give God especial thanks, and offer especial prayers ? It was a great day for all heathen lands when those three wise men worshipped Christ ; they were the first-fruits of the Gentiles ; and as Christ not only accepted their worship, but sent a star to fetch them into His presence, we see His desire to fetch all Gentiles to a knowledge of the faith. Blessed, I say, was that Epiphany ; and blessed this season of the Church in which we still call to mind the will of Christ that the Gentiles should be fetched home, that to them the Gospel should be preached, that on them the glorious light of the Gospel should shine, that they *should* inherit the promises of Christ and be

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made members of Christ, that the Jew should no longer be the one people accepted by God, that the Church of Christ should spread her branches into all lands, gathering in souls from the north and the south, from the east and west ! Blessed be Thou, O Jesus, who in Thy redeeming love didst embrace all nations of the world, and didst come to die for all born of Adam, that, as in Adam all die, even so in Thee, Thou Saviour of all that believe, all might be made alive !

O consider on this day our grace in having been made portions of Christ's Church ; consider what our fathers were in days of old. Were they not blind heathen, carried away to dumb idols, worshipping false gods, bowing down to wood and stone, lying under the shadow of death, without knowledge of the one true God, without hope in Christ, without any Holy Word of God to light their way, without true pastors to feed their souls, without gifts of the Holy Ghost to teach them in times of ignorance, to comfort them in time of sorrow, to strengthen them in time of temptation, groping their way in the dark to dim notions of God, hastening to death without knowing how to prepare for death, and dying without being able to cry to any Saviour for pardon or for consolation in the awful hour of their depar-

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ture? Such was their state; they were benighted, wandering souls, covered with darkness, filled with fearful thoughts, the prey of devils and of their own lusts, steeped in sin, lying fast in the deep mire, ignorant of the way of escape, fearing death and not knowing how to soothe their fears of death. From such a state wise men came; of such our fathers were; were all the people of the world before Christ coming, except the Church and nation of Jews.

And now look abroad; see how many millions of men in many lands worship the one true God, confess Christ to be the Saviour of the world, are instructed in the way of redemption through Him, know the victory which He has gained over death and hell, read the words of Evangelists and inspired men, have true pastors to govern over their souls, are brought into close and precious covenant with God, have become par-

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houses of prayer, where God most surely is, receive heavenly strength in time of trial, heavenly consolation in hours of tribulation !

'Think of these things ; and not only think of them, but act upon them, act as men who know God, and have been brought near to God through His dear Son ; act worthily of your calling in Christ Jesus ; else all these gifts, all these privileges, all these blessings and means of grace, will only increase your condemnation, and heap coals of fire upon your head. It is no wonder if the Gentiles fall into divers lusts, into revelling, banquetings, riotous living, all kinds of vice and sin, but it is a horrible thing if we live like them ; terrible will be the wrath of God upon unholy Christians. We are called to holiness ; we have many helps to holiness ; we know what has been done and suffered by our dear Lord to snatch us out of the devil's power ; and hence, as the wise men made great endeavours to reach Christ's presence, so should we make great endeavours to continue in His presence ; for He is present amongst us ; present with us in our homes when we kneel down to pray, present with us by His Spirit when we think or do any thing that is good, present with us when we receive His blessed Sacrament, present with us in our houses of prayer. He is

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always with His Church, for the members of His body are not separated from the Head; we need not to journey far to find Him; He is near to one of us; He is with us, even in us, abiding, dwelling, staying with us, and we with Him.

O how holily they should live who are united with their Lord, with whom He abides, in whose bodies He has sanctified to be temples of the Holy Ghost and abodes of God. Holy should be our bodies; holy should be our souls; for we are Christ's, and Christ is ours. In this Epiphany we have the glorious light of His Gospel shined into our hearts; in the world to come we shall have the more glorious light of a still closer and better presence. To all faithful men that Epiphany be the true Epiphany, the eternal shewing of the glory of Christ to the elect, the manifestation of Christ when He will reveal Himself as He is, perfect Man and perfect God, no veil hiding His Godhead, and yet His humanity being perfectly seen. Wonderful Christ! Wonderful glory to which the faithful are called! May we be found among the faithful and true, whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, that we may see God in His kingdom for ever!

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.

# Tracts for the Christian Seasons.

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## THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

### *The Childhood of the Holy Jesus.*

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PROPER LESSONS: *Morning*, Isaiah xlv. ; *Evening*, Isaiah xlv.  
EPISTLE, Romans xii. 1 ; GOSPEL, St. Luke ii. 41.

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PRECIOUS as would be the revelation of what occurred in the life of the holy Jesus during those years in which He sojourned at Nazareth, and was subject unto His parents, we cannot suppose that less is written than it would be profitable for us to know. The Holy Ghost has given us, in the Gospel for this day, enough to shew us that while He was perfect God, He was also perfect man, and went through every stage of bodily and mental growth, “of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.” This portion of Holy Scripture also illustrates the humiliation of the Son of God, in suffering Himself to be called the carpenter’s son, and taking upon Him the form of a servant, while He served His reputed father in the lowly labours of his trade. But perhaps its most glorious and most useful purpose is to exhibit the Redeemer in one of His most interesting relations to Christian children, as their example in all things ; in honouring their *parents*, in loving their kinsfolk and

came, the old gentleman accompanied us to church, and during service, in "keeping" as he himself expressed it, the Litany and Lessons, were read for the day. When, in the evening, for a story, he would tell him something about what we were charged to learn, and often, besides the report of what we had learned. My grandfather, though a man, was an old-fashioned man, read much of the best English literature in England. He had a knowledge useful to him in putting it into bits, and in making an anecdote and illustration sweetening. This was the way Sundays were made pleasant, while I remained at home. He was a religious man, and the Lord sanctified him, and by a hallowed duty consisted with the duty to read.

acquaintance, in observing the institutions of the Church, in teachableness, in attachment to the house of the Lord, and in growing in wisdom and in favour with God and man. This grand lesson of the Evangelist in the touching story presented us to-day, was impressed on my own mind in early years; and perhaps some good ends may be answered, if I connect a few remarks on the Gospel with a narrative of the way in which they were suggested to me while I was yet of an age to have a peculiar interest in the example of the Holy Child.

Going once into the country to keep a Twelfth-Day with my cousins, and extending my visit to Candlemas, I found myself introduced to a new and profitable manner of keeping holy the day of the Lord. My grandfather Hartop, who lived at my uncle's, was particularly fond of children, and although a sufferer from disease, preserved an even and cheerful temper, and succeeded very well in amusing us. He was afflicted with the gout, and necessarily passed much of his time in a corner of the fireside, where he was frequently surrounded by the younger members of the family and their visitors, mutually entertaining and entertained by the stories he told, and by *the* questions they proposed. When Sunday



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the old gentleman was unable to accompany us to church, but he passed his time, g service, in "keeping up with the rector," himself expressed it, that is, in reading the y and Lessons, with the Epistle and Gospel e day. When we came about him in the ng, for a story, he would require us first to im something about the sermon, to which ere charged to be attentive for his sake; often, besides the text, we found ourselves to make out between us, a tolerably fair of what we had heard from the pulpit. randfather, though he had been a military was an old-fashioned Churchman, and had much of the best authors of the Church of nd. He had also a way of making his edge useful to his young friends by break- into bits, and serving it up with a flow of ote and illustration, by way of sauce or ening. This was the plan on which our ys were made both agreeable and profit- while I remained at Hedgehill; for my uncle religious man, and loved to see the day of ord sanctified in his house by a holy mirth, y a hallowed domestic festivity, which well ted with the duties of the day, and turned d account the solemnities of the sanctuary.

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And I could wish there were more, among both high and low, who, like my grandfather, might find delight in teaching a troop of noisy children on a Sunday to love the Church, and to "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest" the portions of meat which she provides for them from season to season.

The first Sunday which I passed at Hedgehill was that which followed our Twelfth-Day, and was of course the first after Epiphany. It was a fine frosty morning, and we all met for breakfast with rosy cheeks and gay spirits, anticipating a merry drive to church over the snow which had fallen during the previous day and night, and which had been threatened by the sky and wind for a whole week beforehand. And here my readers must know that the scene of my story lies not in England, but in America; for Hedgehill is the name of a comfortable residence on the banks of the Hudson, about forty miles above the city of New York, which is the great metropolis of the Western continent. A drive to church, in America, on such a morning as I have described, is a thing hardly understood by my British readers, and therefore I must be more particular as to the unusual flow of spirits which enlivened our *morning meal*. We had promised ourselves a fine

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day when we went to-bed the evening before, and as we came down stairs, at the ringing of the prayer-bell, delighted with the sunbeams that were streaking the walls, we were overjoyed to hear directions given to Jupiter, the negro coachman, to "get out the sleigh," and have it at the door in good time for church. Those who have never seen a sleigh, must know that it is a coach, or landau, set upon a sledge of light and ornamental manufacture instead of a carriage of wheels. A swift drive, if a fine winter morning, in such a vehicle, is very exhilarating in the clear cold climate of that country, especially as the horses are always decorated with strings of small round bells, which make a jingling music and fill the air with merriment. In high glee, therefore, were we young folk, at the prospect of a sleigh-ride, and I fear we thought much less of the sacred purpose for which our drive was necessary.

Breakfast over, we all stood at the windows, watching the sunbeams and shadows as they broke over the peaks and hollows of the mountains, between which, and the grounds of Hedge-hill, lay the broad frozen Hudson, nearly a mile in width, and at that time one vast plain of snow, stretching far away to the north and south, and *disappearing on both sides among hills and high-*

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lands. All our talk was, of course, about the sleigh-ride, and how we had enjoyed such drives in years past, and how much better was a sleigh-ride in the country, than a sleigh-ride in town.

“Come, come,” said my grandfather, “you forget, children, that your business to-day is to go to church and to worship God; and that, to-morrow, you will have nothing else to do but tell stories and go out to drive. Here, I must stay,” he continued, “shut up by the fire, without being able to go to the House of Prayer, or to join in the delightful services of the church; and I must beg you to be so good as to listen very closely to what is said by good Dr. Turnham, and bring me back all you can of his sermon.” We all promised, of course, and crowding about the old gentleman’s knees, we received instructions as to the kind of questions he would ask us on our return. “The Gospel for the day,” said he, “is especially designed for children, and I suspect the rector will have something to say to his little parishioners about it; and if he should happen to preach on it, I shall be the more particular in expecting you to remember the whole story of the Holy Child in the temple, for it tells how He fulfilled the laws of the Jewish religion, while *yet* very young, and became an example to Chris-

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tian children in keeping the rules of the Church." And with much more good advice he kept us about him, till the sound of the church-bell came from over the hills, and Jupiter, true to his time, reined up his horses at the house-door, chiming back a gay response as they tossed their necks and shook their sides, and giving an opportunity for my grandfather to remind us that the prophet Zechariah had predicted a time when "there shall be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD." (Zech. xiv. 20.) Away we flew for hats and coats, and soon we were seated in the sleigh, and driving rapidly to church, half-buried in furs and comfortable robes, made out of the skins of the elk and buffalo.

Sure enough the sermon was upon the Gospel for the day, which was appointed, the rector said, because it records the earliest manifestation of that divine wisdom and power, with which the Son of Man spake as never man spake before, and which then began to enlighten the world. Young as I was at the time, I was unusually attentive, and still remember the good rector's manner, which was very simple; but as the church was decorated in country style, and very much overloaded with hemlock and laurel, and other *American* evergreens, arranged in fes-

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toons and fanciful figures, I was occasionally diverted from his subject by my admiration of those fragrant spoils of the forest, and the rude taste with which the parishioners had set them about the holy place. I was called back to my duty by an affectionate address, with which Dr. Turnham closed his sermon, exhorting "the dear children of his parish to copy in all things the holy Son of Mary, and especially in hearing their spiritual pastors and masters in the temple, and in asking them questions at proper times." After Church we went to the rectory, where we stayed till the afternoon service, and then we all drove home again as we came. After dinner came in the candles, when the shutters were closed, and the curtains drawn; and while we waited for tea, we crowded around our grandfather's chair to tell about the sermon. I am happy to say that we gave a very good account of the Gospel, and of much which the doctor had said by way of comment; and to this day, I never join in the service for the First Sunday after Epiphany, without remembering Hedgehill, and the several questions which my grandfather Hartop proposed and answered to our great satisfaction. When he asked the subject of the *Holy Gospel*, I shouted as loud as I dared, "it

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was Christ disputing with the doctors." This got me some applause, but I had taken the expression from an old print which hung in my bed-chamber at home, and which represented the Saviour, not very properly, as declaiming in the presence of the venerable priest, and rabbins, whose astonishment was about the only thing which was naturally depicted. "How is that?" said my grandfather: "did Dr. Turnham say so in his sermon?" And I was forced to own where I had learned the phrase; and so after some other conversation we were sent to bed, and allowed to think a little longer upon three questions which my grandfather gave us to solve, if we could, promising a due reward to the happy child who should answer any one of them correctly, either from what he remembered of the sermon, or from reading, or from his own mind, according to the doctrines of the Church. The questions were as follows:

1. The Holy Child was yet subject to his parents, and of course bound by the fifth Commandment to "submit himself to all his governors, teachers and spiritual pastors." How is it, then, that He disputed with those who sat in Moses's seat, and were over Him by God's authority?

2. *The Holy Child had not yet entered upon*

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city with great anxiety; would you not be likely to answer, How came you to search for me elsewhere; why did you not come here in the first place; surely, you knew that I must be about my father's premises, having no business anywhere else?" When I told him that it seemed to me very natural to make such a reply, he continued—"even so the Holy Child, remaining at Jerusalem, stayed at His Father's house, and occupied Himself in His Father's business, so far as it was private, domestic and within doors, just as any child would dwell in his own home, and be about its domestic occupations and enjoyments. It was perhaps necessary that the Blessed Virgin, and St. Joseph, should be reminded of their inferior share and right to Him, whom they had perhaps begun to love as exclusively their own. But the holy Child would not so remind them of His divinity and His mission as in any way to mar that honour and obedience which He now shewed them in all things, as made under the Law: only, staying in the temple, He allowed them to search for Him, and when the Blessed Virgin took Him gently to task, and calling St. Joseph His father, said, 'Thy father and I have sought *Thee*; He asserted the truth that His Father was



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God alone, by saying, in substance, how is it ye knew not where to come and find Me? The temple is My Father's house, and did ye not know that I must be there, occupièd in its concerns, and delighting in its pleasures?" This exposition, I confess, has dwelt with me through life; and when I once read, in the work of an ancient English priest, that beautiful accommodation of the canticles which makes the spouse searching her Beloved a symbol of the Virgin seeking the Child Jesus, it struck me with new vividness and force. Such use of the ancient Scriptures is sanctioned by the example of the Apostles and of Christ Himself; and perhaps no association more profitable to ordinary minds, can be given to the high poetry of Solomon's song. Thus Ældred puts into the mouth of St. Mary, seeking her Holy Child, many of those passionate exclamations of love, which we commonly misunderstand: "In the streets and in the broadways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me; to whom I said, Saw you him whom my soul loveth? . . . My beloved had withdrawn himself and was gone . . . I sought him, but I could not find him. I called him, but he gave me no answer. . . . *What is thy beloved more than another beloved,*

oh thou fairest among women? . . . My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand!" Such a use of prophetic and poetical Scriptures may not be critically correct, but by the instinct of the Catholic Church it has been deemed lawful, and is thought to render fragrant the closer interpretations of the wisest and most careful divines.

3. On the question how Jesus increased in wisdom and in favour with God, we were more successful. The Athanasian Creed has been most unhappily omitted from the American prayer-book, and therefore many indistinct views of the Trinity and the Incarnation are apt to spring up in the minds of children, which neither their prayer-books, nor their parents, are able to correct without extraordinary painstaking. But my pastor had procured some printed cards, containing this Creed, and had accustomed us to chant it in our catechisings. I therefore instantly remembered a sentence which I had often chanted without any perception of its sense, and so perceived its use. "Inferior to the Father, as touching His Manhood," said I to myself; and I was able, child as I was, to draw the inference which I gave as my reply, in a child's language, "*it means that He was a perfect boy before He was a perfect man.*" "Very true," said my

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grandfather ; and he added, “ with reverence be it spoken ; for on this fact, that He was God before He was born, and ‘ while he hanged yet upon His mother’s breast,’ and while He increased in human stature and human wisdom, and consequently, in the divine favour as a child of man, there turn some of the most important principles of our holy religion.” Yet I have since learned to like quite as well that single explanation of St. Bernard, who remarks, “ this was said not so much of what He was, as of what He seemed, for the Child Jesus, according to His own pleasure, disposed the display of His eternal wisdom, and when He chose, and before whom He chose, appeared wise, or wiser, or most wise, while all the time He was all-wise, and never less.”

Perhaps these remembrances of my twelfth-day visit at Hedgehill may be of further interest to my British reader, if he will reflect upon the proof which they furnish of the Communion of Saints. How far away from English homes and firesides these scenes occurred, and yet in many respects how like they were to scenes which at the same moment were beheld among the families of England ! A common faith thus binds together all the Christian homes in the

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world, and makes all the members of the Holy Catholic Church a great family, with a common interest in festivals and fasts, and all the concerns of the kingdom of heaven. And thus He who was called "the carpenter's Son," has become "great unto the ends of the earth," and the bond of peace among differing nations, and races, and peoples of mankind. The Epiphany of the holy Child has shined throughout the world, and gladdened the utmost isles ; and He, who is found no more among His kinsfolk and acquaintance, the Jewish people, is found in every Christian temple, by those whom He has declared to be unto Him as brother, and sister, and mother. Let us not forget to pray that the veil may be removed from the eyes of the sons of Abraham and Jacob also, that they may see in the Son of Mary their long-promised Messiah, and so at last with Turks, infidels, and all unbelievers, may be made, with us, one fold under one Shepherd, the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

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*P.S. It is with pleasure we state that this and some other Tracts of this Number are the offerings of brethren of the American Church.*

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.

## facts for the Christian Seasons.

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### SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

#### *Christian Unity.*

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PROPER LESSONS : *Morning*, Isaiah li. ; *Evening*, Isaiah liii.  
EPISTLE, Rom. xii. 6. GOSPEL, St. John ii. 1.

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WE may observe in the Gospel for this day, some points which seem to connect it with that of the Sunday preceding. In the temple, the holy Jesus had intimated His mission from His Father, and at Cana He began in the fullest sense to be about His Father's business. In the one case He shewed His blessed mother the time when she must cease to be subject unto her ; in the other He reminded her that the time had come, and that the hour in which a sword should pierce through her soul, was not far distant. And as in the one time He displayed His wisdom, yet submitted Himself to the service of His parents ; in the other He speaks of the hour in which He must become obedient unto the death of the cross, while He begins His miracles and manifests His glory.

But this Gospel doubtless presents an emblem,

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to say the least, of the banqueting-house into which the Bridegroom of the Church conducts His spouse to stay her with flagons of wine. (Cant. ii. 4, 5.) In the household of faith He manifests Himself to His disciples, as He does not unto the world, (St. John xiv. 22 :) and there the Father, with the Son, comes and sups with them, and there they sup with Him. (Rev. iii. 20.) Let the Gospel therefore present to our minds that blessed communion, in which all the faithful are one, and drink of the same spiritual rock, and behold as in a glass the same glory of their Lord, and so are changed into the same image, and grow into a family likeness as brethren, from glory unto glory, (2 Cor. ii. 18;) and we shall then see in the Epistle for the day a peculiar value, containing as it does the heavenly rules which are meant to ensure unity, and peace, and love, among all the members of the family of Christ.

The season of Epiphany has been very fitly regarded as the missionary season; the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles naturally reminding us that there are nations which even yet walk in darkness, and desire the light of His rising. But the subject of Christian unity is *more* closely allied to that of missions, than

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would be at first imagined ; and we may well regard the Epistle for this day, as prescribing these rules of Christian unity, by observing which the disciples of Christ might all be one, as the Father and the Son are one ; this unity is required for the evangelizing of the world, even as it is written of Christ, how He prayed the Father for unity, adding, “that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.” (John xvii. 21.) A little story, which is substantially true, may illustrate the subject which I have proposed, and at the same time shew how the communion of saints may be realized in our own times, and made useful for the conversion of men, and the propagation of the Gospel, throughout the world.

Lucy Parker and her brother, the former about sixteen years of age, and the latter two years younger, were English children, brought up in a village in the neighbourhood of Liverpool, who found themselves, on a certain wintry day, no matter how, in a strange city of a strange land, alone, orphans, and strangers to everybody in the place. Evening was closing fast about them, and the shop windows and street lamps were lighting up, one after another, as they wandered, hand in hand, through the principal thoroughfare of the city, seeking for an inn where they might spend

the night with security from bad company, and at the same time without too great an expense to their slender purse. The people that passed them by, were hurrying to their comfortable homes, wrapping their cloaks and shawls tightly about them, and quickening their pace, as they observed a threatening fall of snow, or wintry rain.

“We must make haste, dear Lucy,” said Ralph, as he squeezed his sister’s hand, “for it is very late, and I feel afraid.” Lucy pretended not to have any fears, but she looked in vain for such a place as she wished to find; the great hotels being all so splendid, and the poor ones so very mean. She had so little money that she dared not go into what seemed the place for rich and fashionable people, and she had so much virtue and modesty that she feared still more to go where every thing gave token of low customers, and of drinking and uncivil behaviour. But it was really getting very dark, and very cold, and Ralph was trembling, as he tightened his hold on her hand; and though Lucy said, “We shall soon come to a place, dear Ralph, I think I remember to have passed here with dear mother,” she was in fact very much alarmed, and the tears were beginning to come to her eyes, in spite of



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her resolution and trust in God. So she remembered One, for whom there was once no room in the inn, of a wintry night, in Judæa, and lifting up her heart, as she passed along, she said inwardly, ‘O holy Jesus, be now and evermore my good shepherd, and guide me by Thy counsel, that I may afterwards be received to Thyself in glory.’” And she had hardly uttered this sweet prayer, made up out of her recollections of the psalter, when she was stopped by the plaintive voice of a little beggar, crying, “please, Miss, give me something, for the love of God, to buy my mother some bread.” There was something in the appearance and tones of the suppliant, that arrested her sympathy, and convinced her that she had before her a case of real distress. The child was a negro, and represented himself as leaving a sick mother at home, who lived by her labour, but had been long confined to a wretched bed by a cold, which had become a consumption ; so that he was obliged to be her nurse, and to beg for her subsistence, her husband having died a year or two before. It seemed strange to Lucy that in answer to her prayer for help, God should thus send her another to be helped, especially as her means were so small, and her own necessities so great ; but *she remembered the story of King*

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Alfred, dividing his last loaf with a pilgrim, and that an act of faith was often required, when God was about to answer prayer. Ralph was less reflecting, and shewed instant alarm, "quick, sister, get out of his way," and he shoved the little beggar out of his way, before he had fairly uttered his first words of distress: and it was this that determined Lucy to stop, and hear the story, and to relieve the beggar, if it lay in her power. So when she had learned the whole, she said, "and what does your mother do for a living when she is well, my little fellow?" "She washes for people," was the reply, "and I go to get the clothes, and to carry them back nice and clean."

It immediately occurred to Lucy to enquire whether the people were kind to him, when he returned the clothes, and from his replies she gathered that they were very charitable, and had given him and his mother a great deal of aid, and that they lived at lodgings, and were in fact the inmates of a sort of hotel or boarding-house for sojourners in the city. So she enquired if it were far off, and finding quite the contrary, she gave the little fellow a sixpence, and promised him as much again, if he would conduct her and her brother to the house. They found *it* a respectable-looking establishment, and on

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entering, were received as at an inn, and shewn into a sort of parlour, where they bespoke lodgings, as if they were acquainted with the place, and were civilly asked for their names, and then shewn to a decent room, where, as soon as they were alone, Lucy knelt down with her brother and prayed for God's fatherly care during the night in familiar words, adding some special expressions of thanksgiving and supplications for defence. In all this her brother joined, and when they had said together the Lord's Prayer, they rose and ate a few biscuits, and drank a little water, having refused tea and other expensive refreshments, which they cheerfully sacrificed in consideration of the shilling they had given to the beggar. Then Lucy made Ralph lie down in a bed in the adjoining closet, and proposed to sleep herself on the sofa which was in the room, after sitting awhile by the fire, and reading the lessons for the evening. "Oh sister," said Ralph, as he shut himself into his closet, "how very lonely and cold the world seemed to-night, when we were walking together in the dark, wintry streets of this hateful place!" Lucy checked him by reminding him how much better they were off than others, and that God and His love were every where, and that pro-

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bably there were many of Christ's children in the city, to whose prayers "for the fatherless children," they were possibly indebted for the mercies of the night.

When the morning came, they prayed together, as they had been always taught to do, and then ate a simple breakfast, and then sat together to consider some plan for the day. It was Friday, and they were to spend Saturday and Sunday in the city, and on Monday they were to sail for England in a ship, to which they had transferred the little store of valuables which yet remained to them. While they were talking together, they heard a bell, and up they both started together, for they thought it sounded like the bell of their own parish in England; and away they went, chasing the sound, for they remembered it was a Litany-day, and supposed they might find a church, like their own, and there they thought they would feel at home, even in so strange a place : and so it proved. It was long since they had been in a church, though they had kept sacred every Lord's day, reading the prayers and lessons in their own lodgings, for they had lived for several months where no church was. They, therefore, gladly entered the *house of prayer*, and they saw the clergyman in

his surplice, going up the aisle to the chancel, in which was a familiar-looking altar, and over it the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, just as at home. They had hardly time to find their way into a seat, and compose themselves, with a short secret prayer, for the service, when the clergyman began with the words, "From the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, My name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto My name, and a pure offering; for My name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts." Though they had never heard this sentence at the opening of service in England, they saw by the American Prayer-Books, which they had taken up, that they were prefixed to the usual sentences, one of which immediately followed; and they felt, rather than perceived, the propriety of such a preface in America, especially at the season of the Epiphany, as attesting the truth of the prophecy, and the universality of the true religion. After this, the service went on very much as at home; and Lucy and Ralph felt at home, even among strange faces, and in a city where they had no friend or helper except God. Then they loved their Church, and understood

its blessings as never before ; and when the service was over, they could hardly go away, but lingered about the door, and the clergyman as he came down to the vestry, which was built at the entrance of the church, gave them a tender look, but said nothing, and they loved him in their hearts, and wished he would speak to them, but seeing he passed them, they turned away, and with lingering looks, went back to their lodging. When the clergyman had got into the vestry, and was putting off his surplice, he said something, which it would have pleased them to hear, to the sacristan, who supplied the place of a clerk in English parishes. "Did you see those children, Richard?" he asked ; "I confess that I have forgotten them, if they belong to my parish, but I was quite struck with their appearance ; the girl was so pretty and modest, and they were both in mourning." Richard thought they must be strangers, but Mr. Worthy charged him to see whether they came again, and to shew them a place to sit in, and enquire their place of abode. Mr. Worthy was a good-natured man, but it was his sacred office which led him to take this interest in mere chance comers, so that it was really Christ who, by His minister, was thus *proving* a good shepherd to wandering lambs.

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When Sunday came, it may be believed Lucy and Ralph were early at the door of the church, where they had been so much comforted and consoled. It was the last day they were to spend in America, and they were glad of that; but they had misgivings about the voyage, and they were glad to go to the house of God, and make their wants known unto Him, who calls Himself the Father of the fatherless. They were surprised, as they entered the church gate, to hear old Richard's voice, who spoke to Lucy respectfully, and said, "Come in, miss; I believe you are a stranger, and church will be full to-day, but I will shew you a place to sit and kneel," and he explained his accosting her, by saying that the rector, Mr. Worthy, had bidden him to take charge of them. A thrill of gratitude to God, and of love for His ministers, passed over their hearts as they heard this, and Lucy thanking the old man, ventured to say that "she and her brother were to sail next day for England, and perhaps the rector would be so good as to put up the prayers for them;" and so they were conducted to a seat, Richard promising to present the request for prayers to the rector himself. Soon after, the service began, and both Lucy and Ralph joined in the chaunts and responses with a full voice,

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fuller than ever before ; and their hearts were fuller than their voices ; and their eyes filled too with thankful tears, when they found the clergyman committing them to “the God who alone spreadeth out the heavens, and ruleth the raging of the sea.”

It was the second Sunday after Epiphany, and the whole service had seemed just meant for themselves. The Psalms for the fourteenth day of the month were full of comfort ; and they found especial happiness in reciting the seventy-second Psalm, which they had been told, in England, was a twelfth-day Psalm, and which contained a verse that had been taught them by their father on his death-bed, “He shall keep the simple folk by their right, defend the children of the poor, and punish the wrong doer.” And now far away from home, in strange America, where nobody knew them, they found a new joy in worshipping, and also a new and fresh meaning in old, familiar words, especially when they came to the delightful verse, “His dominion shall be also from the one sea to the other, and from the flood unto the world’s end.” They felt that they were in Christ’s kingdom, even there, and now they understood the promise, “His name shall *endure for ever* ; His name shall remain under the



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in, amongst the posterities which shall be blessed through Him, and all the heathen shall praise Him." And so with grateful hearts they joined at the close of the Psalm, "Blessed be the name of His majesty for ever, and all the earth shall be filled with His majesty, Amen, Amen."

The sermon was on the Epistle for the day, and perhaps it may not be amiss to recall something of what the clergyman said. He began by saying that the Epistle detailed many of those charities which ought to mark Christians in their intercourse with one another: for that the creed was in one sense a table of precepts, every article of our belief implying certain practical duties. Thus our belief in the communion of saints, lays upon us a commandment to cherish love and brotherly kindness towards all members of the apostolic fellowship, throughout the world, which is the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. And this love must shew itself, as in the apostolic day, not only by chance charities and alms-deeds towards those who live in our way, but by going out of our way to do good to our brethren in all the world. Thus the precept, 'distributing to the necessities of saints,' while at other times it might remind us only of "visiting the fatherless and the widow," at our doors, at this season of the

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Epiphany reminds us also of those in other lands who need our assistance, and demand our aid. The preacher quoted many passages from the Acts of the Apostles, shewing how near the primitive Churches were to each other in heart, even when they were so widely separated by seas and mountains, which were not yet made highways, and seemed only meant as barriers against the spread of the Church, and against the circulation of catholic benevolence and charity. Yet in that day, Apostles went from Europe to Asia, and from Asia to Europe, and presbyters passed to and fro, continually, distributing to the necessities of saints, as one common family in which there was no such thing as near or remote, when any member was suffering, and could be benefitted. A famine in one place made almsgivings and collections in another, and the poor saints at Jerusalem shared the riches of the wealthy believers at Corinth. How unhappy then, that while by the inventions which God has allowed human genius to perfect, mountains and seas are as nothing, and all lands are brought so near together, we have been losing that heavenly principle of unity, which in primitive times rendered the greatest distances and most formidable obstacles as flax to the flame of Chris-

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in love. From St. Paul's example we might  
rly conclude that the promotion of brotherly  
ercourse, and the strengthening of weak  
urches, by going to and fro, and thus increas-  
g knowledge, was the true way, and the shortest  
y to effect the great result of "bearing Christ's  
me to the Gentiles," and establishing His  
gdom in the world.

As the children heard these things, they  
ought they understood and felt them; but  
y were sure they did so, when he said in  
clusion, as follows: "It may be, my brethren,  
t your several lots in life may give you many  
ortunities of putting these principles into  
ctice. Some of you may go abroad, and  
ne of you may meet others, your fellow-Christ-  
ns, who come from distant countries. All  
h chance encounters, as they would be called,  
h Christians of separated branches of the  
urch, give you opportunities of doing some-  
ng to strengthen the communion of saints.  
hen you go abroad, take letters from your  
stor, certifying your Christian character, and  
nmending you, at least in case of sickness or  
nt, to the brotherly love of Christians. It  
y seem a small thing, but if done in faith,  
d will bless *the least* beginning to the restora-

tion of that heavenly unity, which His blessed Son commanded His children to preserve. The poorest emigrant from abroad, seeking the place of service in our households, may perhaps have been brought up in the nurture of the Church, and may have humble friends at home, to whom occasional accounts of their welfare, for the love of Christ, might do much good; and the humblest emigrant, who leaves our country to sojourn in other lands, may be made in some degree a missionary of peace and good-will to men." The sermon was concluded by a quotation from Bishop Horne, whose book upon the Psalms was one of Lucy Parker's treasures, (the gift of her mother,) and she was thrilled with delight to hear his familiar and sainted name. It was as follows: "There was a time, and it is pleasing to look back to it, when a Christian, furnished with proper credentials from his bishop, might travel through the world, from east to west, and from north to south, and be received to communion with his brethren, in any part of the globe then known. There will be a time, and it is comfortable to look forward to it, when infidelity, heresy, and schism shall come to an end, and there shall be *no contention* among the redeemed, but in giving

glory and honour, and thanks to Him, that sitteth on the throne. In the mean season, as they will stand fairest for heaven who live in concord upon earth, let us consider how we may best perform this part of our duty."

As Lucy was passing out of the church, with many new thoughts and emotions, Old Richard beckoned her into the vestry, whither of course Ralph followed her, and where she was informed that the rector had desired to see her for a moment after service. Mr. Worthy soon came in, took them by the hand, and spoke to them in the spirit of his sermon. "You are going to sea," said he, "and I suspect you are going back to England, for I see you are English, and have English Prayer-books in your hands; let me give you an American Prayer-book, in order that you may not forget your fellow-Christians here." He then asked some questions, which brought out Lucy's story. She was the daughter of an English physician, who, though living in very moderate circumstances, had given his children a good education, and trained them in the fear of the Lord. His untimely death had changed the fortunes of his family, and occasioned the removal to America of the two children and their widowed mother, who had endeavoured to establish a small school in a town in the neighbourhood of Boston, but had

suddenly sickened and died. This led to Lucy's endeavour to return, and she was about to sail on the next day, to see what could be done for her among her surviving relations at home. "We are orphans," she said, "reverend Sir, and we desire your blessing and your prayers." The blessing was given by Mr. Worthy with tears in his eyes; but Lucy departed, little dreaming what was in his mind, though he had enquired where she was to be found.

That evening "Miss Parker" was enquired for at the boarding house, and the Reverend Mr. Worthy, with his wife, entered her room. The lady addressed Lucy with a tender and affectionate manner, and the rector drew Ralph to his side, and began to talk to him about England and America, assuring the boy that America was, "next to his home," the very best place in the world to live. How it came about, it might be tedious to detail, but when Mr. Worthy left, Lucy had agreed to spend a week or two at his home, and to let him order her trunks out of the ship the next day; postponing the voyage until the next packet sailed. It was with eyes full of tears that Lucy offered up prayers, after this interview, with her brother, and blessed God for all His mercies. "Our Father" had a new meaning *that night*; and "'Father of the fatherless' He

as been to us," said little Ralph. "Yes," added his sister, and "from the ends of the earth will I call upon Him, when my heart is in heaviness."

Lucy Parker never made the voyage to England, or when Mr. Worthy had become better acquainted with her, he said that he had something to propose to her, which she must consider as a question of duty to God and His Church. He had long been looking for a teacher to some orphans, whom he had formed into a school, which his wife had been teaching at a great sacrifice of herself, until a permanent teacher might be found. He regarded Lucy Parker as sent to him by a good providence, and he wished her to undertake the duty, and to live in his own house, and be to him as a daughter. As for Ralph, he must go to a mission school in the West, and learn to be a soldier of the cross, for which Mr. Worthy was ready to prepare him, at the expense of some of his good parishioners. It was now several years since the orphans went through this singular crisis in their history, but they are now satisfied that God designed it all for their good. When Ralph came to visit his sister some time ago, he found her the happy instrument of the best of blessings to some fifty orphans, picked up from the highways and hedges of Boston, and among them was one little negro, the very same

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that had been made by God's providence the means of guiding them to all their present good. "If ever I become a priest," said he, "I shall owe it all to this poor little creature, whom I treated so ill, that gloomy night, when we were ourselves strangers, with no one to take us in!" "Yes," answered Lucy, "for so dependent are we upon one another, and so much is charity 'twice-blessed;' I think I understand at last the doctrine of Christian unity, and feel something of that which the Apostle says in the glorious Epistle to the Ephesians, which none but true members of the Holy Catholic Church can understand, 'There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism.'" "I see what you mean," replied Ralph, as he tried to make amends to the little negro for his former fault, "'For the body is not one member, but many . . and the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. . . Nay much more these members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary . . that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.'"

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.



## Tracts for the Christian Seasons.

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### THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

*The Centurion an example of Faith and Prayer.*

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PROPER LESSONS: *Morning*, Isaiah lv.; *Evening*, Isaiah lvi.  
EPISTLE, Rom. xii. 16. GOSPEL, St. Matt. viii. 1.

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It is remarkable that no less than three Roman centurions are mentioned in the New Testament as bright examples of faith. First, there is the centurion whose faith and its gracious reward are commemorated in the Gospel for this day. Then there is he who stood by the cross, and who, when he saw nature suffering with her suffering Lord, cried out in the fulness of his believing heart, "Truly this was the Son of God." And finally there is Cornelius of the Italian band.

Of the first and second of the centurions mentioned in Holy Scripture, we know but little. But we do know that Cornelius, the third of these believing Romans, was the first Gentile convert, always excepting the wise men from the east, and that it was through his faith that a door *was opened* for the whole Gentile world,

and ourselves amongst the number, to  
 into the Church of God. It is not howe  
 devout Cornelius of Cæsarea, the immedi  
 ject of the extraordinary vision of St. Pe  
 rather the centurion of the Gospel, who  
 before us, as an object of earnest and  
 meditation at this season, in which we  
 morate the "Epiphany" or "Manifesta  
 Christ to the Gentiles;" because to hi  
 wonderful miracle was manifested the  
 power and Godhead of Jesus. As th  
 men represented not only the gentile w  
 general, but the far east, out of whic  
 came, in particular, so was the centu

Capernaum both a representative of the  
 world in general, and of that great people  
 ticular, which had once in the person of  
 tus issued a proud decree that the whol  
 should be taxed; and which in the pe  
 Constantine should yet one day bow in  
 adoration before the Cross. The cen  
 humility and faith are proofs that he had  
 to venerate and worship a greater th  
 Cæsar of the seven hills.

Towards the person of Christ, this  
 captain manifested the deepest reverer  
*humility.* He exalted the Divine R

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n his heart to Almighty power, while he abased himself so low as to count himself unworthy to approach a presence so glorious. His whole bearing and conduct are so remarkable that our Lord Himself is filled with admiration. He does not venture to ask Christ to come under his roof. His humility bids him feel that he is unworthy of so great an honour. But his faith removed the obstacle which his humility would have set in his way. To its far-seeing eye it was not necessary that Jesus should come where the sick servant lay. He need only speak the word and his servant should be whole.

But while he counted himself unworthy that Christ should enter into his doors, he was counted worthy that Christ should enter into his heart." It is remarkable how he illustrates his faith from his own experience and from the profession of Romans. We say 'illustrates,' for it does not appear that his faith stood in need of any confirmation. "I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me, and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh, and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." The centurion's argument is as follows; I am a man clothed with authority; those who are higher than I have given me

authority which I use. Those who are under my rule obey my commands. My word is to them. I have power to send them far near as I will ; so that without moving from place, I can yet accomplish the things which I would. How much more Thou, who art over the powers of heaven, who hast com-

~~hosts of angels and spirits to go forth at bidding, and run swiftly at Thy command execute their ministry of mercy or of wrath needs not that Thou come under my roof. Thou only speak the word. Do Thou command one of these angelic ministers forth on the errand of mercy, and my soul shall be whole.~~ Thus to his far-seeing does Jesus appear the true Cæsar, the not merely over the dominions of earth, over the kingdom and hosts of heaven.

The Gospel tells us the result. The beset servant was healed, and faith received such glorious rewards as must have still more brightened its eye and nerved its heart. Of this belief the Gentile we hear no more. We cannot but see that he went on from strength to strength until finally he found a joyful entrance into the everlasting kingdom. But though he appeared before us in the Gospel, only to perform on

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of sublime faith, and then disappears for ever from our earthly gaze, we are not left without some knowledge of his character. For this single act marks the man. It places him in that list of worthies of whom Abraham is said to be the father. When we know that a man belongs to that list of illustrious names, which the Holy Spirit holds up to us as examples of faith, in the midst of an unbelieving world, we know what is most important to be known concerning him. For these children of Abraham have all one stamp. There may be shades of difference, but the essential character is the same in all.

But besides this single memorable act of faith, there is a circumstance mentioned which tends to illustrate the character of the centurion. The elders of the Jews whom his humility induced him to employ to bring his petition before the Great Physician, pleaded on his behalf, as a ground of favour towards him, that he was a warm friend of the Jewish people, and had been active and liberal in his efforts to promote their spiritual good. "For," say they, "he loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue."

No doubt he was by birth and early education a pagan. And it is probable that as such he had

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come into Judea, an officer in the Roman army. But when placed in daily intercourse with the ancient people of God, when he was made acquainted with their sacred books, and their pure and spiritual worship, it would seem that his eyes were opened to see and know the true God. In short he became one of those proselytes of whom we read so often in the Acts of the Apostles. At the publication of the Gospel, they were found, not only in Judea, but in all the great cities of the Greek and Roman world, forming a link of union between Gentile and Jew; in contact with both, touching the one by race and the other by religion. They were thus, by the providence of God, placed in a position peculiarly favourable for embracing the Gospel, when, in the fulness of time, it was preached by Apostles and Evangelists. Their understandings had been opened to perceive the truth which was contained in the Scriptures of the Old Testament: and yet they were not blinded by hereditary habits and prejudices against the dispensation of the New.

The centurion was not of the seed of Abraham, but yet he had, as we have seen, Abraham's *faith*; and while Jews scoffed and rejected, he *believed* and adored. His *faith* excelled all that

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the Saviour had experienced among the chosen people of God. "When Jesus heard it He marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel." And then in the words which follow, our Blessed Lord announces with deep solemnity, both the rejection of the Jews, and the ingathering of the Gentiles; "I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness." Here we find that the faith of the Roman centurion was the occasion, and that we ourselves were, in part, the objects of the gracious prophecy uttered by our Saviour, if haply we shall make "our calling and election sure." And in the relation in which this portion of the holy Gospel stands to ourselves and to the ingathering of the whole heathen world, do we find the strongest reasons for giving to it our devout attention at this season of Epiphany.

Let us then consider in the first place, the excellency of faith as exhibited in the centurion, and the great need of its increase in the Church, to fit it for successfully carrying forward the missionary work. To speak of the excellency of

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faith in general, would be to recount the noblest acts which adorn our race. To our mind there is nothing so sublime in all history as simple child-like faith. It so affectingly unites and contrasts infant weakness and Almighty power. No tale of heroic deeds, no pictured battle scene, no fortunes of rising or of falling empires, have ever stirred in us the sublime emotions which we have felt a thousand times, in reading the simple records of child-like faith contained in the Old and New Testament. What can so deeply thrill our hearts as that bright recital of the deeds of faithful men, given by St. Paul in the eleventh chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews? And our Blessed Lord has pronounced such words of praise upon the faith of the centurion, as to prove that he is worthy to be enrolled in the same glorious catalogue.

But we are most concerned with the centurion's faith at present, as it suggests to us how we may bring before the Redeemer of the world, a prevailing intercession in behalf of the heathen, who are perishing for lack of the saving health of the Gospel. We behold him with strong faith and earnest prayer interceding with the Great Physician to heal his sick servant. We *cannot* believe that Jesus would have been less



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ready to grant spiritual health to the beloved servant, if that had been the object of the prayer. Here then we see a point of connection between this narrative of intercessory prayer, and the great missionary work which has been intrusted to the Church. The centurion was moved to this intercession because he loved his servant. But we are commanded to love all men as we love ourselves. We are taught to regard all men as our brethren. A relation is here announced to us by our common Father and Lord, which the centurion may not have understood. He may have acted on lower views. But it is impossible for us, who have been enlightened by the divine Word, to overlook the universal brotherhood of mankind. We are bound by the ties of our common nature, as well as by the command of God, to seek the welfare of all men, both spiritual and temporal, in every possible way. We are bound always to "make prayers and intercessions for all men." When we pray we are enjoined to intercede for all men by saying, "Thy kingdom come." Do we want encouragement to this intercession? we find it in the reward of the centurion. If he sought and obtained a temporal blessing for his servant, shall not we, if we pray with like earnestness

and faith for "the healing of the nations, the conversion of the world to God, or spiritual health for our brethren who are suffering under the leprosy of sin? The centurion yielded simply to the promptings of a kind and loving heart, when he interceded for the health of his servant; shall we not yield to the command of the heart's desire of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath redeemed us and all mankind? Shall we who have been gathered out of the heathen into the kingdom of heaven, suffer millions of our race to perish without ever even once thinking that a Saviour has died to redeem us from sin and death? It is really startling to think how imperfectly the Church has fulfilled the parting injunction of her Divine Lord. "Teach all nations," was the commission and command; and how has it been fulfilled? We are members of that Church which God's Saviour has purchased with His own blood. The parting charge, "Teach all nations," ought to be ever ringing in our ears, until there is no nation or tribe on the earth that has not offered the glorious light of the Gospel of Christ.

How then can we so truly account for the comparatively small success of missions in modern times, as by the want of faith and prayer in

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Church? Never has the Church put on so glorious a missionary character as in her earliest age; and never has there been an age so marked by faith and prayer. You may account for the spread of the Gospel in that first age in part by the mighty miracles that were wrought; you may account for it in part by the powerful influence of men inspired; you may account for it in part by the peculiar state of the heathen world, and by the general expectation which then existed of something better which should take the room of the old worn-out superstitions of the world. All these bore their part; some of them a mighty part, in christianizing the world. And they were all peculiar to that time, and do not belong to us. But besides all these, faith and prayer were most powerful means then; and they have lost none of their power now. These are peculiar to no time: they belong to every age alike, and always possess their own divine might and strength. Let us recall then to our minds and to our hearts the zeal and faith of the primitive Church. So long as we are 'cold and dead ourselves, we can never become the instruments and means of converting the world to God. All our efforts will be barren unless they are watered with the *prayers and tears* of believing hearts. In the

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primitive Church there was one heart, one mind, one effort, and that was to bring all men to the knowledge of the Gospel. "They continued stedfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers." (Acts ii. 42.) "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." (Acts iv. 32.) Such, in faith and prayer and unity of heart, long continued the disciples of the early Church. And when the ingathering of the Gentiles was once distinctly revealed to them as the great object of the sufferings and death of their ascended Lord, they gave themselves to this glorious work with an ardour and a zeal which knew no bounds. The increase of Christ's kingdom was uppermost in their thoughts; it was the burden of their prayers; for this they were ready to go forth to the ends of the earth, knowing that they must endure hardships as soldiers of the cross; for this they were ready and glad to suffer reproach and even death. When any went forth as missionaries they were borne upon the prayers and faith of the whole Church. Prayers and intercessions were made day and night for those to whom they were sent as well as for the whole world, that they might *learn to know* the riches of redeeming love.

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very new conquest over the kingdom of darkness caused the heart of the Church to beat for 7. "Thy kingdom come," and "Thy will be done," was the one ardent, ceaseless prayer of every heart. Then "grew the word of God mightily and prevailed." Then were "whole nations born at once."

Alas! how different from this zeal and faithful prayer of the primitive Christians, has been the temper of our branches of the Church in modern times! How long was it before the missionary spirit appeared amongst us at all, and then at last it did appear, how partially and imperfectly did it move and stir the body of the Church? And may we not say, how partially and imperfectly does it still warm the whole Church? Where amongst us is the unity and ideal of Christ's first followers? When have the minds of our missionaries been held up and strengthened by the prayers and intercessions of the whole Church? Many of us, blessed be God, have indeed felt a deep interest in particular missions, and have given freely for their support, and prayed earnestly for their success. And we rejoice that, to particular missions, success has not been wanting. But we are *unrestrained to acknowledge, with deep abase-*

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ment and penitence, that our missionary enterprises, as a whole, have not answered our hopes. There is a disproportion we are apt to think between the means which we have used, and the results which God has vouchsafed, if we may reverently use such a mode of speech. Where then lies the difficulty? It is not in the divine grace, nor in the divinely-appointed ordinances and institutions. For the grace of God is the same now that it was in the first age of the Church. It flows from the same infinite and inexhaustible fountain. It flows out to bless and save, through the same divinely-appointed channels. The Sacraments are the same, and have ever the same life-giving power. The ministry is the same in all its ordinary gifts, sent and endowed by the same Holy Ghost. Where then is the defect? It is in ourselves. Every thing on God's part is perfect and powerful to save to the uttermost. But having made us His fellow-workers, the conversion of the world is made in a mysterious and wonderful manner to depend upon us, upon our labours, our prayers, our faith. God might have proclaimed the Gospel to the whole world by the ministry of angels in the same way as *the glad tidings of a Saviour's birth were first*

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anced to the shepherds of Bethlehem. Then responsibility would have been different; recently less. But now has God made us sensible for the spreading of the truth; He placed the means at our disposal, and promised to be with us always to bless them and make them effectual. It is indeed enough to wake us from our sleep to think how the progress of the Christian faith, for many ages so interrupted, depends upon us, both as a Church, and as individuals. Without the spirit of Christ burning in our hearts, and reaching out to embrace all mankind in holy love and charity, it is vain for us to expect that our cold and mechanical efforts to spread the Gospel will prosper.

If we are not found striving with one heart and mind to establish Christ's kingdom in all the world, if we are not making continual intercessions for the out-pouring of His saving health upon all nations, then does the work of missions perish. A Church throbbing with spiritual life is ever a missionary Church; and a Church which is cold and dead will ever be indifferent and stationary. If at the command of conscience, rather than from the impulse of love, we undertake some missionary enterprise as a duty, *it will be coldly carried on.* But if

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throughout the whole extent of our branches of the Church we should stir up ourselves to labour and pray as one man for the conversion of the heathen world, with a firm persuasion that God will answer our prayers, and bless our labours, then should we see glorious and great results.

It is not enough to give a certain sum of money annually to the cause of missions, for the quieting of our conscience, and there to let the matter rest, to think no more of the subject, as we fear too many are wont to do. The missionary is *our* representative, doing *our* work, in which duty will never allow us to cease to feel a deep interest, and strengthen it with our prayers and our faith. We have indeed given our money, but our prayers may be worth more than our gold. Our constant sympathy, our ever-active faith, may be infinitely more valuable and more effectual in furthering the propagation of the Gospel among the heathen, than our largest contributions to the missionary treasury.

Weigh what has been said, good reader, and give henceforth more alms, more prayers, more thought and care to the conversion of heathen lands.



## acts for the Christian Seasons.

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#### *The Miracles of our Lord.*

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PROPER LESSONS: *Morning*, Isaiah lvii. ; *Evening*, Isaiah lviii.

EPISTLE, Rom. xiii. 1. GOSPEL, St. Matt. viii. 23.

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DURING this holy season of the Epiphany, minds ought especially to be called to meditate upon the miracles of our Blessed Lord. In many times in its course are these mighty works brought to our remembrance, from the first recorded miracle which our Saviour wrought, to that last stupendous one which shall be wrought hereafter, when the trumpet of the Angel shall gather the elect from the four quarters of the world. And the object of these few pages is to assist, if so it may be, devout minds in profitably considering these wonderful manifestations of Almighty power. Now there are two points of view, from which the Gospel miracles ought to be regarded. They are real events, and they are sources of instruction after the manner of a parable: as one has said, "just as Christ speaks parables, so are His works parables."

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They are real events, as real, it is hardly necessary to say, as any other event related in Holy Scripture, as real as any thing of which we ourselves are most certainly assured, our own birth, or life, or whatever may have befallen us during it.

Still, while we believe them to be real events, actual works wrought by our Blessed Lord, as much as any other act of His earthly life, we may not therefore doubt that a great deal of deep instruction is conveyed under the veil, if so it may be called, of outward reality; we may not doubt that our Lord's works possess in this respect the same wonderful character as His words. We feel assured that He who has hid such manifold instruction under the outward forms of visible nature, will not be likely to do less, under those mighty works by which He proved that He was Lord of all things, throughout the universe. From these two points of view then we must always regard the miracles as real events, witnessing to our Lord, and as wrought parables teaching us deep spiritual truths.

Bearing this then in mind as the first step, we shall find it well to go on in the next place to settle under what general heads the miracles

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y profitably be ranged. And these it is suggested should be four in number.

- I. Those that relate to the world of Nature ;
- II. Those that relate to the world of Man ;
- III. Those that relate to the world of Spirits, and,
- IV. Those that relate to the empire of Death.

It is worth observing how the Church seems to countenance such a division, by bringing before us in the Gospels for the season, miracles which would include the several heads we have laid down. Thus in the miracle at Cana, and in the calming of the tempest, we observe the first ; the cure of the leper, and the healing of the centurion's servant, the second ; in the casting out of the many devils, the third ; while the

Sunday presents to us the final and stupendous miracle, by which the conquest over the devil's fearful empire shall be achieved and completed. This may indeed be a mere matter of accident, if in speaking of such solemn matters, no word like this can be employed, but it rather suggests the appearance of design, or it may be a divine intuition.

Now if we look at these various miracles, not only as real events witnessing to our Lord, but without any reference to their spiritual instruc-

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tion, we shall see that they cover a wide ground, and reveal a vast expanse of power. In fact, the ground they cover is as wide as that over which, to our view, the whole work and rule of Divine Providence extends. Wherever the Providence of God seems to our minds to have dominion, there does the Author of these mighty works prove His power to be supreme. And if this be so, and that it is so all these miracles plainly bear witness, then do we not behold Him as One in nature and in essence with the God of Providence? Do we not see Him as King of kings, Lord of lords, and Ruler of all things, by whom not only the worlds were made, but who governs and who rules them with power which is His own? Do we not recognise Him, as the wonderful ladder, joining heaven and earth, by whom the blessed angels pass up and down, upon their merciful ministries to the heirs of His salvation.

Probably if we have not considered this matter in this light before, we shall hardly be aware, how complete a witness the miracles bear to our Blessed Lord: on how many points they touch, and with what a clear and solemn voice they proclaim Him to be "very God of very God, *begotten* not made, being of one substance

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with the Father; by whom all things were made."

But having listened to their testimony, and learned how very far it reaches, let us turn to those more inward and direct instructions, which they convey to us: and see if we may not find in them something which may enable us better to know ourselves, and our own spiritual state. And that they not only witness to the divine power of our Blessed Lord, but also fulfil this other great office of teaching and warning, is just what we see to be the case with all those other works of God by which we are surrounded. Let us look for instance on the natural world. Surely there is no more eloquent witness to the great Creator than it affords! Even so great and clear, that St. Paul considers those without excuse who did not learn from the things which were made, the invisible things of God, His eternal power and Godhead. And yet while this is so, and while every thing in heaven above, in earth beneath, and even in the awful depths below, thus speak of God, how many a good and holy lesson, how many a deep and precious truth do they also teach us. The changing seasons, the day and night, the sunrise and the sunset, the *spring time and the autumn*, nay, even down to

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single flowers and plants, and the minutest things, how are all visible things the preachers of unseen realities and truths. And hence we say, that it is in but in harmony with the plan, by which, to speak reverently, God has wrought in creation, that our Saviour's miracles should be ordained to serve the same two-fold end.

It is of course impossible in this place to speak of the teaching of the miracles in any thing like detail. All that can be done is to lay down great principles, and to shew the manner in which they may be applied. And this application we must mainly leave with our readers, suggesting that it will be a most proper and most profitable exercise for this holy season. And in doing this, we propose to take up the four great divisions that we have made, in order.

Under the first division, we shall find that our Lord wrought in manifold ways. At one time, He changes the character of things, as in the miracle at Cana, and when He bade St. Peter walk upon the waves. At another, He calms the raging of the elements, as when He hushed the storm upon the sea. At another, He increases, as when He multiplies the loaves, what has been already made; at another, He bids the *power of life and growth* to cease, as in the cursed

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tree. And here again we cannot but be  
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ver thus witnessed to. Our object now, how-  
r, is not to dwell on this, but to make the  
ritual application to ourselves, which it is  
ieved we may do profitably. Suppose, then,  
it we regard all these visible things as being  
blems of our souls and things connected with  
m, and look upon these real works of our  
rd as representing our Lord's work in them.

How very impressively do all these changes,  
en, speak to us of equally wonderful changes in  
r souls, those changes by which humility comes  
place of pride, and forgiveness of revenge, and  
interestedness of selfishness ; those changes by  
rich sorrow becomes joy, and pain gladness,  
d tears are turned to smiles ; those changes  
which our small and weak capacities and  
wers are raised up into strength and might ;  
ose changes by which unimproved abilities are  
ade to run to waste, and blasting and barren-  
ss comes upon the soul, which bears no fruit,  
d gives no signs of life, beyond the leaves of  
ofession and pretension. All these matters  
e deep spiritual truths, and in them all the  
onder-working hand of God is manifested, just  
plainly as it is in those visible miracles which

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the Redeemer wrought. It would be well if we were accustomed always in reading these accounts, to make these spiritual applications to ourselves. If, when we behold our Lord calming with His word the raging tempest, we should remember that only He can calm the troubles of our souls, or the tempests of our lives, and bring our little barks safe into the havens where we would be. If, when we see Him changing water into wine, we would bethink ourselves that the waters of sorrow and trial may by Him be changed into the wine of strengthening and refreshment. If, when we witness the loaves and fishes wonderfully increased, we would consider, that even to such manifold issuings of good, He can bring our small and scanty resolutions and purposes: or with a deeper reverence behold the endless miracle, by which from priestly hands the bread of life is given to a fainting world of souls. If, when we stand beside the fig-tree, we would recollect that the Spirit of the Lord will not always strive with men; and that, if with great outward show, and much pretence of fruit-bearing, there is yet no fruit of holiness within our souls, then we cannot escape the doom which sentences our spirits to eternal blasting. If we read *these* miracles with such thoughts in our minds,



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ch searchings of ourselves, such applications to our state and wants, should we not see deeper than we do, and might we not hope to be better than we are?

Let us turn now to the second class of our Lord's miracles, those namely wrought upon the world of man. And here our object ought to be, in every one of the poor sufferers to see ourselves; our own souls, that is, in all their stages, whether of mortal, or of less deadly sickness. Is not the application a most easy one to make? Who are the blind of this world if not we, whose spiritual sight is so darkened by the power of sin, that we cannot see the glorious things of God? Who are deaf, if we be not, whose ears are so continually closed to the warnings and the entreaties of our Lord, to the voices of the Spirit, the calls of His ministers, and the supplications of the Church? Who are dumb, if they are not, whose lips are shut, and their voices unheard in prayer or praise? Who are so lame as those, whose flagging, halting step along the road of holy duty is but a cripple's journeying? Who are the palsied and the lepers, but they whose moral powers are palsied, whose souls are tainted by the touch of sin? If there be any failing in these symbols,

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it is, that they have not strength enough. For sometimes it does almost seem, as if in one poor soul all these various diseases meet, as, blessed be God ! they do not meet in the fleshly frame.

Indeed the connection between the diseases of the body, and the sins of the soul, is very striking. The former came into the world in direct union with the latter. And all along the course of human history they remain, sad witnesses of the fall, way-marks of evil and of death, tokens of the power of Satan over the souls of men. And it may not, perhaps, be improper in this connection to suggest, that a good way for persons who are familiar with illness, whether in themselves or others, to prevent their spirits from becoming hardened to it, is to call off the mind from the *body* to the *soul*. To remember that there are sufferings and woes there, which the others only feebly represent ; and that the inward evil is the occasion of the outward. Holy persons have found this plan most advantageous to them, and all of us no doubt would find it so to ourselves.

And something akin to this we may as readily do, in the way that has been suggested, in *reading* over these miracles of healing. Perhaps

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a very natural and instant feeling, which will spring up in our minds as we read them, will be one of gratitude that we are not so afflicted. This will be well : it is a feeling that should arise. But lest it make us proud and self-satisfied, let us look inwardly, let us look into our souls. The sight will abase us : and yet while it does so, it will also awaken a deeper gratitude. For in time we shall remember that He who healed the body's maladies is also powerful to the healing of the soul : and that though He may be now, far, far removed from human view, still by appointed ministrations, and authorized channels, He whose finger once directly touched the body, still touches with His grace the sinful but repentant soul.

Higher still our thoughts must rise. The lifeless objects of creation, and men's living bodies, these form but a part of things which are. There are spirits of good and evil, a wide world of life, and thought, and awful action, spreading all around us, wheresoever we may turn. And here the Lord reigns also. And that not only over the heavenly hosts, whose ranks delight to do His will, and to worship in His presence ; but also among those evil and rebellious spirits, who for their pride have lost their first estate, and while they wait their final doom, are still

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permitted to tempt us here on earth. There are probably no miracles of which we read, with feelings of deeper awe, than those in which our Lord manifests His control over the spirits of darkness, and not only bids them depart from the human frames of which they have taken possession, but sends them wheresoever He will. And yet there is a sense, in which we may say that every one of us has been, and perhaps even is, possessed. We were so at our births. For we were held and embraced by evil. Not by a power, not by an influence, but by a person and a presence. We must beware that we never for a moment lose sight of the personal existence and attributes of Satan and his hosts, and content ourselves with vague ideas about evil influences, which amount to nothing, or which rather do unfit us for serious contest and successful warfare with the enemies of our soul's peace. Nor is it possible for us to live as we ought to live, to take such views of life as we ought to take, unless we own how once before our baptism we were held and possessed by the spirits of evil, and how ever since by yielding to sin and temptation, we have been coming more or less under their power, and putting ourselves in a position like that of those wretched men, from

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whom our Lord actually cast out the evil spirits. And then we learn whither we must go for aid ; to whom we must seek for help ; and are taught to cry as they did to the Saviour for relief. And if sometimes we find our sins within us, calling out, " What have we to do with Thee, art 'Thou come to torment us before our time?" let us find in that only another proof how much we need God's gracious aid, and how earnestly we are bound to beseech Him to drive from us all these shapes of evil, even though we be torn and rent as they come forth.

One thing more remains. We have travelled over a wide and wondrous field, and we have reached the place where our footsteps are to pause, and our journeyings to be stayed, in the gloomy realms of death. For not even here is our Lord's power stopped. And it is well worth our while to observe the arrangement of the miracles of raising up the dead, from which much good instruction may be derived.

It cannot fail then, one would say, to strike us, that our Lord gave life to the dead human body at various intervals after the spirit had gone forth. Thus the breath had hardly left the body in the case of Jairus' daughter ; in that of the young man, the *only* son of his widowed mother,

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several days had passed; while in that of Lazarus the process of decay had already begun. It is not difficult to apply all this, and its teachings, to the spiritual states of men. Some there are who are but a little way advanced in sin, who have committed but few offences, and have not strayed far from the strait and narrow way, and to these the Lord seems to speak in gentle tones, as He did to the ruler's daughter. Others there are who have wandered farther, who have plunged deeper into sin, and these require a louder call, as when the Lord exclaimed, "Young man, arise." And others still are dead and decaying as it were in sin, by long continued lives of evil-doing, and to these the Saviour's voice must come, as it came to Lazarus, opening the gloomy gates of the grave. Yet to all here is the comfort, here is the lesson; to all the voice is sent. To all the Saviour calls, to leave the dens and sepulchres, and foul hiding holes of sin, and come forth into life, and light, and holiness. No man can tell us, we alone can tell ourselves, where and what we are. And oh, with what a deeper feeling shall we stand beside the death-bed, the bier, the tomb, if we are accustomed ever to feel, that there is a death in *this life*, more awful than the body's solemn

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slumber in the depths of earth, the death of the soul, through unrepented sin. And better still will it be for us, if realizing and feeling this in all its fulness, we shall also learn that He who raises up the body, can also raise up the soul however sunk in evil: and that they are holy and blessed who have an abiding part in that first resurrection.

Thus then we see that these actual miracles, wrought in the world of nature, of men, of spirits and of death, are to be ever answered to, all through each Christian's life, by miracles of grace, wrought in the Christian's soul; miracles, which are even more wonderful in one sense than these former ones, for that the spirit is greater than the body, eternity is more glorious than time, and the salvation of the soul is better than the healing of the mortal frame. And then above all things, such thoughts will bring us near our Lord. Throned as He is now, in His infinite glory, and far removed as we may think, from all our wants and all our weakness, here in these thoughts we can draw near Him, we can bow at His feet, and feel His touch, and kiss the hem of His garment. It is His manhood which encourages us to approach Him: and we can safely do so, *if indeed we be truly trained in the*

to carry out in life and action all that we learn. Then shall there be a witness in souls, that nothing can ever touch or move. when the miracles of grace, and the discipline of life are over, God shall crown our souls with that greatest, mightiest of all, by which He will raise up His own accepted children in the likeness of their Lord.



# Tracts for the 'Christian Seasons.

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## FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

### *The Mohawk Mission.*

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PROPER LESSONS: *Morning*, Isaiah lix. ; *Evening*, Isaiah lxiv.

EPISTLE, Coloss. iii. 12. GOSPEL, St. Matt. xiii. 24.

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THOUGHTFUL persons cannot but be struck at times, with the manner in which Almighty God permits different branches of the Holy Catholic Church to carry out, in greater or in smaller ways, some of those wonderful prophecies concerning the spreading of the Gospel, whose promises are so full of comfort. It has been the privilege of the Church of England to have many opportunities of this kind presented to her, as well in times past, as at present. And it is a matter of no little comfort to those who love her, to know that many of these opportunities have been improved ; while, at the same time, it cannot but be an occasion of humiliation, although it ought also to awaken to present diligence and earnestness, to feel that many more have been neglected. There is further comfort also, to be derived from the reflection that any person who should sit

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down and try to recollect all that had been done by our Church, in calling nations that she knew not into the one fold of Christ, would fall very far short of the reality. Hidden and unknown saints are a characteristic of the Church; humble and forgotten labours are a characteristic too. And as in the visible world, many of its grandest features and its sweetest places, are those on which few eyes have looked, so in the Church, many of its holiest members are unknown, and many blessed works on which the heart loves to dwell, and over which the memory delights to brood, are little known, or almost quite forgotten.

An American priest, whose pastoral life has been mostly spent amongst the scenes of which he writes, is permitted, in God's providence, to recall to his English brethren, some of those labours of their common mother, by which, in days of lukewarmness and laxity, she still manifested her divine life, and seemed to answer in her own person to the prophet's words, "Behold thou shalt call a nation whom thou knowest not." It would seem that the glorious season of the Epiphany is the fittest of all seasons for such remembrances.

One of the most beautiful portions of the state of New York, is what is called the valley of the

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**Mohawk.** It is about a hundred miles in length, and is watered by the river bearing that name, which running through its whole extent from west to east, joins the Hudson about one hundred and sixty miles from its mouth. Occasionally in passing along the valley, one meets with massive precipices rising almost perpendicularly to a great height, whose worn and ragged surfaces attest the fearful strife that once attended the bursting through of the waters, which are here broken into rapids and sometimes into waterfalls. But usually a belt of rich and highly cultivated meadow spreads on either side the river, which sometimes stretches out into extensive fields, called by the country people flats, dotted over with venerable trees, and snug farm-houses. In all cases, these flats or meadows are bounded by high hills and mountains, on most of which the self-planted forest still waves; while at frequent intervals, thriving villages and towns call off the eye, and suggest the thought of rapid improvement and advancing cultivation. It was in this valley, before one civilized man had set his foot within its pleasant places, and while the primeval forest covered all the land, that the Mohawks, the most powerful of the five confederate tribes who went under the general name of the Iroquois, esta-

blished themselves. These five nations were by far the most remarkable of all the aborigines of North America. In point of capacity they far surpassed the tribes by which they were surrounded. All this held especially true of the Mohawks, whose name therefore was held in great respect among their neighbours, and formed the most fearful battle-cry that they could hear. Such was the soil in which, somewhat more than a century ago, our Church was called to do her Master's work.

It was on a bright autumnal afternoon in the year 1712, that, accompanied by an Indian guide and interpreter, the first missionary of the venerable Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, drew near to one of the two Mohawk villages. He was expected by the tribe, who had learned some time before at Albany, that the good queen whom they had been taught to call their mother, had determined to send some one to them to instruct them in her own religion; and often had his expected coming been talked over in the long summer twilights, and many had been the speculations as to what it was that he was coming to teach.

Thus the missionary's coming was looked to *with interest*, and he was already clothed in

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he eyes of these simple-hearted children of the forest, with a sort of sanctity. For until it has been cramped by prejudices, and warped by false reasonings, the mind of man will ever recognise the holiness or separation of places, things, and persons. Accordingly, with whatever erroneous impressions, mingling themselves with their better feelings, they were well disposed to give him, not only a hearty welcome, but an honourable one also, according to their views and practices. When therefore he had arrived within sight of the village, a signal from the interpreter brought him to a stop; and immediately there appeared advancing toward him, with steady steps and in complete silence, all the old men and young warriors, divested of all the insignia and weapons of war, and bearing in their hands large bunches of bright autumnal flowers, as emblems of peace and welcome. Gathering around him in the same silence, which was only broken by his own voice, as with the slight necessary change to adapt it to the circumstances of the case, he uttered the solemn commencement of the Visitation Office, which was instantly rendered to them in their own tongue, by the deep guttural tones of the interpreter; *the procession passed on and entered the*

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village. Those words were a proper and long-remembered opening of the missionary's services among them. For surely if when the priest of God enters the house where bodily sickness calls him to minister in spiritual things, he employs this solemn form, much more could he use it here, where he was surrounded with diseased and suffering souls. Nor was it without a meaning, that now for the first time amid those lovely scenes which had been compelled to hear only the war-whoop, and the cry of battle and of blood, there was uttered this word of peace.

Arriving at the village, the whole company gathered around a tall pole which stood in the very centre of the open greensward, in the midst of about fifty wigwams, surrounded by a pallisade, and hung with long strings of scalps. Here the missionary was placed upon a mat within the dusky circle which pressed around the warriors, who ranged themselves in order before and beside him, and which was now increased by the women and children, who thronged to witness the strange and unwonted spectacle. How strange were the sights that met his eye, and to how many wonderful passages and prophecies of Holy Scripture must his mind have turned as he

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looked about him. There was the scalp pole with its terrible trophies gently waving in the evening breeze; there was the strange silent company of savages, with their quick glancing eyes scanning him so searchingly, and watching his every movement; the company whom he hoped to wash with Water, and for whom to break the Bread, and to preach the word of life. There beyond was the circle of bark wigwams, with their smoke lazily rising, as he had so often seen it rise from the happy cottage homes of England; there was the little patch of open land beyond the pallisade, with its few signs of rude and careless cultivation; there was the rippling river, and beyond on all sides the dark forest and the steep mountain, hemming them in, and separating them from the world. He had need of a strong faith, that lonely helpless man, to support him in his weakness and his loneliness. However he had little time for thought, and little time even for murmured prayer, or for throwing himself upon His holy promise, who has pledged Himself to be ever with His appointed ministry, and surely never more with them than in such times of trial. For the pipe, without which the Indians never debated any important matter, was at once *sent round the circle, beginning with*

the oldest warrior, and then being handed to himself, he was asked to say why he came and what he wished to teach them. What his reply was, we do not precisely know; and therefore while he is preaching his first sermon to these Mohawks, feeling no doubt, as he never felt before, all that it was to preach his Saviour's Gospel, let us dwell for a little time on some thoughts about missions that seem to be suggested by the sight of that one lonely man, amid that crowd of untaught heathens.

One of the great mistakes which our Church made in all her earlier missions, one from which she has not even yet entirely freed herself, and one whose results were and are the most evil, was that of sending out but one man to cope with a mass of sin and ignorance, with which, unless by a miracle, he could not cope successfully. The mistake arose from measuring every thing by that one ecclesiastical form and aspect which the Church wore in England, and neglecting to recur to the labours and the triumphs of her earlier days. For it should never be forgotten, that in reference to her relations to the gathering and training of human souls, the Church exists under two aspects, which are expressed indeed by these two words. She



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is to gather in, and here she is aggressive; she is to keep and train, and here, using the word not in a political sense, she is conservative. Now, the parochial system is the system by which she is to accomplish this latter work; and here, it may be, that with hereditary memories to aid him, and the constant presence of God's holy house, and the graves of other generations, and continuous services, and sacraments, and rites, a parish priest, so that his field of labour be not suffered to become too wide, may do the Church's work. At all events it is by the parochial system that the Church is to perform her office of keeping, training, carrying on, and holding in the faith.

But look at her as aggressive in a heathen land: as having to do with the stubborn mass of sin and evil living, of error and of unbelief, and what can the parochial system accomplish there? What materials has it to work upon? How can it assume shapes? How can it work itself out? Clearly in no possible mode. The work is to gather, not to keep; to collect, not to preserve. And all the modes of operation, plans of working, and schemes of advance, must differ from those which shall be employed in a parish. And moreover, look at the priest himself; in the parish he has *sympathy, support, and a continual home-*

feeling ; he does not stand alone ; he has his flock about him, many of whom in their own spheres, and without the least obtrusiveness, can hold up his hands and lighten his labours. But coming to a heathen land, he stands most literally alone, in his one person is comprised for the time being the whole Church ! There cannot for a long time perhaps be gathered together even two or three to claim the Saviour's promise. And well may the heart sink, and the hand fail, and the spirit break, which are thus shut out from sympathy and aid. Not so provided our blessed Lord, when He sent out His disciples two and two.

And this is the mistake under which our Church has always more or less laboured ; she labours under it now, both in England and America. For at this moment in both countries, there are virtually heathen masses in which her work ought to be, and must be, if she will accomplish any thing aggressive. And yet in both countries she seems to expect to accomplish her labours, in and through the parochial system. The American Church has indeed in the wide north-west her Nashotah, and her Missouri mission, and England has abroad her New Zealand missions. But now *both Churches* cling, not only where they should,

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but also where they should not, to the parochial system. What a different story should we have to tell of all our heathen missions, what a different one of this Mohawk mission even, had the primitive plan been followed: had a bishop with his staff of clergy been sent out in place of that one feeble man; had they, strong in their allied strength, in the presence of an apostle with apostolical authority, and in the fuller claim to the Redeemer's promise, set up the daily sacrifice of prayer and praise, instead of the intermitted services; the continual round of instruction instead of the broken and interrupted teaching; the numerous stations instead of the single, changing, and uncertain one; the well divided and thoroughly accomplished scheme of labour, instead of the unshared, unsystematized, and therefore imperfectly discharged load of duty. Would that the hearts of Churchmen might even now be stirred, to see the evil of trying to do a given work by means of agencies intended for other purposes; and so, leaving the parochial system in its proper place, would restore to its position and sphere of operation, the primitive aggression, or if people will not be frightened at a word, itinerant system of the early Church. Then the parish will come in, in its *proper place*, in strength and orderly beauty,

and the desert places, made ready for its coming, will "rejoice and sing."

But we have left our missionary to a long sermon, although it is said that for the many things he had to tell it was not so, and we must return to the Mohawk village. The first service, or any thing like a service, was over. The missionary, when he had ended his discourse, had fallen on his knees, and recited several psalms and prayers, while the savages looked on with reverent attention, and at last the company broke up, and scattered to their dwellings. There was obviously something that night resting on their spirits, that had never been before. Their usual sports were foregone, and though from time to time dark forms might be seen gliding softly here and there, yet it was not long after darkness had settled on the forest and the plain, that all human sounds were hushed, and there were no signs of life but the sentinels of the village, and the solemn sounds of the woods. That was indeed a solemn hour. The visible things of God, that from generation to generation had declared His invisible attributes to these poor heathen, had now added to their silent testimony, the commissioned voice of him who was to declare to them an "unknown God." Revelation

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had come, to complete and crown the imperfect work of natural religion. The first seed had been sown, and sown in a soil that was better than many another in the world ; the priest had spoken and the Indian had heard. The thoughts of each we cannot read, but they must to either have been strange and solemn.

And now the missionary labour was fairly begun. And a long and tedious, and to his view unfruitful course, it seemed to be. Comfort he had none but in hope of doing good. He never saw the face of Christian man, except he made a long journey for it by foot-paths through dreary forests, where there was not only difficulty, but even danger. Five months of the year he was almost buried in the snow, and in all months he was borne down with watchings and labours. Yet he toiled on. His usual attendance at his services was, he himself said, sixty or seventy, and an hundred and fifty when the savages were all at home, and he gathered a band of thirty-eight communicants. Welcomed as he was at first, he never seems to have well understood the Indians, and at the end of six years he wrote of his mission and its prospects in utter despair. He had done nothing, could do nothing, nothing could be done. It was plain that the lonely,

uncheered man, had given way under all his trials; and impatience had seized upon him. Who can wonder, with all his labours on his hands, that it should have been so? It would have been stranger indeed had it been otherwise.

And now there came an interval of time, when the mission was suspended. The plants that might have sprung up and borne good fruit, were suffered to be overrun and choked by the weeds and brambles of natural growth. The Indians, too, continually learned more evil from the English at large, than they had of good from the missionaries in particular. And when the mission was once more resumed, it was under even less favourable circumstances than at its commencement. Five times a year the missionary at Albany, nearly fifty miles distant, came among the Mohawks, to instruct them, and to perform sacred offices. Yet were these small labours blessed. Baptisms were numerous, and the communicants increased. The labours of the first missionary, which to him had seemed so ineffectual, and so completely lost, were beginning now to tell. The broken ground had been made ready. So little can men know what their *works* do really amount to; so weak is it for those

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who discharge honestly their duty, to complain and faint, because they do not see results.

A Baptism among those Indians in that early time was a more than usually interesting spectacle, and a Communion was no less so. Children and adults were both baptized by water poured on them. But the adults went down with the priest to the beautiful waters of the Mohawk, and kneeling down in the bed of the river, had the water poured upon their heads, just as we sometimes see it represented in old rude pictures of our Blessed Saviour's baptism. While the sweet Mohawk chaunts, with their low musical tones, from time to time rang out, and mingled with the solemn words of the priest. Often at Communion, the altar was reared in the magnificent shades of the forest, which stretched off in a hushed silence in all directions; and here again the Mohawk "Holy, Holy, Holy," rang out, a tongue of Babel, subdued to the unity of the pentecostal faith. The Church was doing her work, and she was doing it well. And better days moreover were in store.

In 1735, and now I shall venture on giving names, Henry Barclay, a name worthy to be had in all good remembrance, was appointed catechist of the Mohawk villages, and two years after was

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sent out to England to receive sacred orders. For this was one of the trials entailed upon the colonies by the unfeeling refusal to send them Bishops. And many were the valuable lives that were sacrificed, to say nothing of the impoverishment of those whose all was but a mite, in these noble journeys. Pilgrims indeed they were, as strong-hearted as we can well imagine, and as worthy of our love and honour as any who ever sought the East ; pilgrims indeed they were, who thus crossed the ocean to obtain the apostolic laying on of hands, in the apostolic line, and brought back to these western wilds the grace of the Lord's ministry. When Mr. Barclay returned, his poor Indian flocks shed tears of joy, and his heart was cheered in his lonely labours. Those labours were most successful. At the end of five years, only three of all the tribe remained unbaptized, and his flock numbered five hundred.

His great enemy among the Indians themselves was the vice of drunkenness, in which they were encouraged and helped on by unprincipled persons among the English. The murderous attacks of the French Indians were much more fatal to the prosperity of the villages. It is impossible for us in this day, and especially in England, to enter into the horrors of savage warfare, or to



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estimate the continual state of most fearful anxiety which it entails. Nor is this the place to go into its details. It is only mentioned to shew what trials, within and without, were to be met and undergone in this attempt of our Church to carry out the duty laid upon her by her Lord. And these external fears and trials were not concluded till Canada had been conquered in 1760.

After Mr. Barclay, faithful men continued their labours among the Mohawks, and with continual and good success, aided and supported by one, who should not be here forgotten, Sir William Johnson, the steady friend of the Church in the Mohawk valley; whose works live after him in two venerable churches, which he contributed largely to erect. At the war of the revolution, the Mohawks in a body emigrated to Canada, carrying with them the bell of their church, its sacred vessels, and the books for holy service. There their descendants still remain, Christians and Churchmen to this day. And thus has our Church for a century and a half borne with her this seal to her apostolic character, and called a nation, whom she did not know, to Christ.

I have had a simple tale to tell, and some plain and practical thoughts to suggest. Yet is it a tale which *ought not* to be forgotten. For who can

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tell what blessings may not have been gained for our holy mother by these blessed labours among a heathen tribe; labours which by God's blessing were crowned with such complete success? Who can tell what the Church may not one day accomplish in a region consecrated by such labours, such tears, such prayers, as those of which I have been writing? It always seemed to me, as if those two old churches, memorials of the faith and charity of earlier days, and one of which still bears the name of England's patron saint, were not only witnesses to faith, but also links of unity, and proofs of an apostolic mission.

Many generations of these poor Mohawks have passed away, since they welcomed in their own rude manner the first English priest who came among them. And who shall tell how many of them may not appear, in that day when our mother shall present to God her trained and saved children, among those whom from the "world's wide circuit she shall summon up?" Often has this question occurred to me, when I have stood looking at the old burial-place of this noble Indian tribe. And never without my thanking God for the witness which that burial-ground would one day render; when we should learn what judgments had been averted, what blessings gained,

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at triumphs won, by the labours, the sacrifices,  
d the prayers of that humble and yet glorious  
ssion ! “The righteous shall be had in ever-  
ting remembrance.”

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WESTERN MISSIONS.

A HYMN FOR EPIPHANY.

LORD, when Thou didst come from heaven,  
Edom sought Thee from afar,  
With her gold and incense given,  
By the leading of a star ;  
Westward then from Eden guiding,  
Was the light of Bethlehem shed ;  
Like the pillar'd blaze abiding  
O'er the wandering Hebrew's head.

Westward still the world alluring,  
Hath the risen Day-star beam'd,  
And, the sinking soul assuring,  
O'er the world's wide ocean stream'd.  
Westward still, the midnight breaking,  
Westward still its light be pour'd !  
Heathen Thy possession making,  
*Utmost lands Thy dwelling, Lord !*

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Westward where from giant fountains  
Oregon comes down in floods,  
Westward to Missouri's mountains,  
Or to the wild Iowa's woods,  
Where the broad Arkansas goeth,  
Winding o'er savannahs wide,  
Where, beyond old Huron, floweth  
Many a strong eternal tide.

Where the wilderness is lying,  
And the trees of ages nod,  
Westward in the desert crying,  
Make a highway for our God !  
Westward—till the Church be kneeling  
In the forest aisles so dim ;  
And the wild-wood arches pealing  
With the people's holy hymn.

Westward still, Oh Lord, in glory  
Be Thy banner'd cross unfurl'd,  
Till from vale to mountain hoary,  
Rolls the anthem round the world ;  
Reign, Oh reign o'er every nation,  
Reign, Redeemer—Father—King ;  
And with songs of Thy salvation  
Let the wide creation ring.

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.

# racts for the Christian Seasons.

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## SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

*The Prayer-book and the Gentiles.*

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PROPER LESSONS: *Morning*, Isaiah lxxv. ; *Evening*, Isaiah lxxvi.  
EPISTLE, 1 St. John iii. 1. GOSPEL, St. Matt. xxiv. 23.

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WHEN, three hundred years ago, the season of Epiphany was first celebrated in our present English service, that service was confined to the churches of England and Ireland only. This year, which completes its three-hundredth anniversary, has seen the same service celebrated from east to west, around the solid globe. The good men who compiled the Prayer-book from our ancient liturgies and rituals, were evidently pleased in the reflection that they were giving unity to the worship of the realm of England. For "where-heretofore," say they, "there hath been great diversity in saying and singing in churches within this realm; some following Salisbury use, some Hereford use, and some the use of Bangor, some of York, some of Lincoln; now from henceforth all the whole realm shall have but one use." It is certainly pleasing that their good work has been *so much* blessed beyond their utmost

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thought ; for we cannot recall these associations, at the season of the Epiphany, without reflecting that what was originally done for an island-Church, has been productive of lasting benefit to the whole world ; and that the Prayer-book which proposed to give oneness to the worship of a realm, now gives oneness to the worship of an empire on which the sun never sets, and harmonizes the prayers of a race divided into separate nations, and scattered throughout the earth, and among the islands of the sea. The Prayer-book, which once did no more than perpetuate the faith of a Christian people, has moreover been made to manifest Christ to the heathen : and has thus borne no inconsiderable part in the fulfilment of a prophecy which we read in a lesson for this day : " I am found of them that sought Me not ; I said, Behold Me, behold Me, unto a nation that was not called by My name."

As I write these lines, there lies before me a map of the world, in which those parts of its surface, which are subdued and held by the Anglo-Saxon race, are coloured red : and the red parts of the chart, inserted every where, are nearly one-fourth of the whole. " God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem ; and Canaan shall be his servant." The prophecy of

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Joah is fulfilled in thee, oh England ! Beginning from that little heart of the world, the British isle, that Anglo-Saxon red is flowing every where. From the head to the foot ; from Cape Hurd to the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Horn, it runs and glows. The whole of North America is red ; the whole of New Holland is red ; New Zealand is red ; India is red ; and the sea is spotted red all round the globe, and from pole to pole. Nowhere is there a group of islands but the red is there. In the China sea, the Indian ocean, the South Pacific and the North, in the Caribbean, and the Mediterranean ; yes, and where not beside ? lo ! the spreading, pushing, driving, indomitable Anglo-Saxon blood !

Doubtless the spirit of this map which I describe is in some degree the spirit of vainglory ; the spirit of Nebuchadnezzar when he said, " Is not this great Babylon which I have built." But a devout mind may use it for a better end. As I gaze upon it, thinking of the wants of the world, and of the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles, can I be proud for England ? Comforting and inspiring indeed is the reflection, that wherever I see that almost universal red, there are Churches " which have but one use ;" and ships going between them, which carry the same " use" wherever

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they go. But can I glory when I consider how much remains to be done? when I consider that God's "blessed Son was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil," and that, in spite of all that comforts and encourages, "the works of the devil" are every where more conspicuous among the Anglo-Saxons than the fruits of the Spirit, or the genuine spirit of "peace on earth, and good will to men?" Fifty millions of the Anglo-Saxon race are said to "have spread from the little three-cornered nook of old England, and to have left their names, their language, and their deeds, stamped upon various portions of the earth." Unhappily, they have carried with them heresies, and schisms, and strifes, and envyings, and hatred, which all that was good in their common origin has not been able to counteract. The Prayer-book was the bond of brotherhood which might have held the race together as a family: and it is a simple, historical fact, that nothing but that unhappy rebellion against the Prayer-book, i. e. against the Catholic faith which it contains, the earliest outbreaks of which the holy and judicious Hooker strove in vain to allay, has made this Anglo-Saxon race a house divided against itself.

Few among earnest-minded men will be dis-



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posed to deny, that if any thing permanent and great has been done for the heathen by Anglo-Saxons, it has been done by the Church of England; by her bishops and priests; and by her Prayer-book, which is but Holy Scripture moulded into creeds and prayers. Yet in all that she has done, she has been crippled, and thwarted, and shorn of strength, by the domestic schisms and heresies with which for three hundred years she has been contending, and by which she was at one time apparently overcome. Had these heresies and schisms never been propagated or encouraged, under the mistaken notion of doing God service; and had the people of England remained true to their Church; how different might have been the harvest of her labours among the Gentiles. Fifty millions of men, mingled through and through with other races, inspired by one faith, and worshipping with one worship, and gifted at the same time with an enterprise, ingenuity, and perseverance, absolutely irresistible; what might they not accomplish for the world!

In connection with this suggestion, there are two natural reflections; the first, that schism is indeed a "work of the devil;" and the second, that even yet it may be destroyed.

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Satan often transforms himself into an angel of light ; and in the wicked work of " sowing discord among brethren," we may well believe he would appear, quoting Scripture for his cavils, as he did when he tempted the Lord of glory. That schisms are the offspring of his malevolence is plainly implied by St. James, when he declares that " wars and fightings" among Christians are the fruits of lusts, and by St. Paul, when he classes " heresies" with other shameful and revolting " works of the flesh." Yet in the beginning of schisms there is generally much apparent zeal for truth, and earnestness in practical religion. Ever since the Church was founded, there have risen up among her own children, persons forward in rebuking her, as less holy and pure than themselves. There have often been mistaken men, and deceived as well as deceivers ; led away by over-estimating one class of evils, and having no dread of another. Thus, in the Hebrew Church, when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rose up against Moses and Aaron, they appear to have been sincere in the opinion that they were righteous, and Moses and Aaron oppressors and misleaders of the people. They and their companions were far from being a mob, or rabble. Korah was a Levite, and all of them

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were "famous in the congregation, men of renown." Their sincerity, too, was very great; they said to God's own stewards and priests, "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them;" and they appealed to men's senses for the truth of their charges against the priesthood, saying, "Wilt thou put out the eyes of these men?" There can be no doubt that they regarded themselves as holy men, much better qualified to minister before the Lord than Aaron and his sons, and quite free from any share in the abuses which they saw very clearly to have arisen under the established system.

Precisely similar was the origin of schism in the Church of England. There was a time when in all the realm there was "but one use;" and Christmas and Easter, and all Sundays in the year, were kept by Englishmen with one worship, and that the pure service of the Prayer-book. Some things there were imperfect, and many which time only and God's grace could remedy; but these things gave occasion for the question, 'Wilt thou put out our eyes?' and the complaint, 'Ye take too much upon you.' Amongst the first who separated from the Church there was no doubt much of sincerity and zeal; many of them

not what they did." They did not foresee bloody wars, and the unholy rebellion they were entailing on succeeding generations and even less did they imagine the innumerable forms of religious strife which they were engendering. Had they foreseen that after three hundred years of bitter conflict, the Church would be represented, in all the world, by uniting faith and worship, and themselves only by innumerable sects, most of them far less agreeable to their consciences than the Church had been, would they have begun the unhappy work of division? If their love to Christ survived the mistake as to His Church, they would have felt that they were swallowing a can

they must be "tried by their fruits." They designed to institute a religion in which the creed should be the same, but the worship more pure and scriptural: and in the course of a century they leavened an immense portion of the kingdom with their opinions, and inspired them with their project. And of all their energy and effort what fruit remains? Among the dissenters of England, thousands deny the Trinity and the Incarnation; and among the rest there is no unity of sentiment, or of action, except in their common attacks upon the Church, to which they owe all that they retain of common principle and practice. Three centuries of dissent have borne little positive fruit; but have retarded, and crippled, and in every way diminished the acknowledged success of the Church in manifesting Christ to the Gentiles.

But the British dissenters have no real conception of the heinousness of schism, as it is seen in other portions of the world. The presence of the Church among them has greatly benefited their own condition, and has kept them from the more offensive stages of decay. They must go to America to see what English dissent must answer for, before man and before God. In nothing is *the test* unfair, for in New England

stead of English Puritans, their descendant become, to an alarming extent, deniers of Trinity and the Atonement; disbelievers in merit, and the eternal retribution of sin; doubters of the inspiration of the Scripture; those who retain these great principles, we retain them with any unity of principle as to importance or practical bearings: and the progress of opinion among them for the last years, as proved by their literature, and colleges, is from stage to stage of growing belief. The ancestors of the present inhabitants of New England, if they could arise from the dead, would very generally (if their published doctrines are any evidence of their true fe

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such is the case generally along the Atlantic coast of America, through which, as in England, the preservative influence of the mother Church is strongly felt. But the immense west of the American Republic is a wilderness of schisms, entailing every sort of heresy on swarming millions of men, and degrading many of them to the condition of civilized heathenism. Of the Christian sects in western America the "name is legion;" and they have given birth to some sects which are not Christian, as for example the sect of Mormons, who are an active and a warlike tribe of men, who have retired into the depths of the American wilderness, and are there building up a state or nation, which has been called, not inaptly, the "Turkey of America." In the course of a century they will be a heathen race, like the Chinese or the Mahommedans; and perhaps the fiery persecutors of the Church: but their origin can be fairly traced to English non-conformity. Even those more respectable sects in western America, which retain the name of their parent sects in England, are so different that English settlers often disavow them, and join the Anglo-American Church, which has here and there its missionaries in those parts. The writer has now before him a manuscript, of which one of the

ablest of those missionaries is the author, and which testifies these things. "In one little village," says he, "you shall see five gloomy, barn-like buildings of red bricks, almost within the compass of five hundred yards. On Sundays these places are resorted to by people from the village and from distant farm-houses; but many of their neighbours and familiar acquaintances have no religion at all. The five meeting-houses bear the names of rival sects, and perhaps two or three of them are names known in England. Here the same sects are vastly inferior, for in England the dissenters themselves are greatly influenced by the Church, and it is not easy to depart so widely from its doctrines and practices. For example, one calls himself a Baptist, but the Baptists of Great Britain might not value the compliment, and we have sects of Baptists, literally known, in sober earnest, as 'Soft-shell Baptists,' and 'Ironside Baptists;' the latter, I believe, being immersed in the rivers, and the former practising the rite of immersion in vessels of water warmed for the purpose. Another professes himself a Methodist, but Wesley would disclaim his progeny. A third is a Presbyterian, but such an one as the Presbyterians of the older states of *America* disclaim, and who would be as little ap-



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proved by his namesakes in England and Scotland. I was lately god-father to the son of a Scotch Presbyterian, who, disgusted with the Presbyterianism of 'the Valley of the Mississippi,' had conformed to the Church, and become warmly attached to it. To prove the strength of his attachment, and the new light in which he now beholds the religious history of his own beloved Scotland, he authorized me to name my little godson William Laud; and accordingly he bears the name of the archbishop whom his ancestors have for generations so bitterly reviled."

Schisms are "works of the devil" when first conceived; but it is only when they are finished that they are seen to bring forth death. English non-conformity originated in scruples as to very little things, but it scrupled not with a little fire to kindle the great matter of a thousand pestilential heresies, which are now producing spiritual disease and death among millions of their children.

But "the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil," and the Church, which is His body, is able to destroy schism. If the millions of Anglo-Saxons now spread abroad upon the face of the whole earth, might be reduced to the unity of faith and wor-

ship from which they have been so miserably divided and dispersed, what might not be their power in universal Christendom, and their success throughout the world, in propagating the Gospel of Jesus Christ! One quarter of the globe is in their hands, and what remaining quarter could hold out against their embassies of love? This is an inspiring thought, and if too large for faith to lay hold of, faith may be assisted by reason. Among all these Anglo-Saxons, no book, except the Bible, is so current as the Prayer-book. "The Church of England," said an eminent American dissenter, "is, after all, the religion of the Anglo-Saxon race; it is identified with their history, their literature, their growth, and their glory." The confession was the result of irresistible conviction. Even in America, the Church, which is scarcely half a century old, exercises a moral power which can hardly be conceived. Its origin was feeble, and it was even odious. The first American bishops were afraid to be seen in the streets, for a long time after their return from England, where they received consecration. There are now thirty American bishops, and the clergy have increased from some few scores to fifteen hundred. Yet the *real influence* of the American Church must not

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be estimated by these numbers. Thousands of her Prayer-books are scattered throughout America, and are ministering to the wants of souls, who are cut off from all other means of enjoying her blessings. In the army and navy of America, the officers and the men are found to prefer clergymen of the Church for their chaplains; and to crave the possession of Prayer-books. The Senate of the United States, elected from all parts of the country by general suffrage, and composed of select, and generally able and intelligent men, is found to consist of a large proportion of Churchmen: and it may not be improper to state specifically, that two of its brightest ornaments and most venerable members, Daniel Webster and Henry Clay, have lately joined the communion of the Church, the latter in his old age receiving holy baptism, which had never been administered to him before. Of the twelve Presidents of the American Republic, the greater proportion have been Churchmen, and nearly all of them have attended the services of the Church during their official life at Washington. These facts prove conclusively the power of the Church over the intelligent minds of a country in which she labours under the greatest disadvantages, and furnish reasons for the belief that

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she must eventually become the religion of the masses, if they can be saved from irreligion, or reclaimed from infidelity. In New York, where twenty years ago the Church was numerically weak, it is now more numerous than any single sect ; and in Philadelphia it is also the foremost of all religions. In both places its growth is attributable to conversions ; and converts are chiefly made among the intelligent classes ; who conform to the Church much less from the efforts of Churchmen to make proselytes of them, than from their spontaneous dissatisfaction with the religion in which they were reared. Everywhere, in America, the ministrations of Church missionaries are welcomed ; but “the labourers are few.” The poverty and self-sacrifice of missionary life are repulsive to young men, and the ease with which wealth is acquired is very attractive ; and probably, for a long time to come, unless God in mercy interposes, the growth of the Church will be retarded for the want of clergy.

If such is the state of things in America, it is plain that “the Church of England is, indeed, the religion of the Anglo-Saxon race ;” and that the Prayer-book, which is now used in all parts of the world, among fifty millions of Anglo-

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Saxons, is in fact at this moment their most natural bond and cement. It is historically the heritage of the whole family, and as a matter-of-fact, exercises upon them, at this moment, a civilizing social influence, if not a power directly moral and religious. To every intelligent man among them, the words of the Liturgy are familiar: the forms of matrimony and of burial are admired by them, if not precious to their hearts from powerful associations; and many of the peculiar phrases of the Prayer-book are as household words. Whatever the Anglo-Catholic communion may be called to suffer, she has a stronghold upon the affections and the principles of a mighty race of men; and to destroy her is beyond the power alike of governments or of mobs.

In view of these facts, let Churchmen learn faith in God, and perseverance in prayer. And to pious and sensible men among dissenters, let them often put the question, kindly, but earnestly, why they should continue a warfare which for three hundred years has been so mischievous and so abortive, instead of joining the Church's communion, endeavouring to ensure its purity by efforts in her behalf, and enabling her to prosecute more efficiently her glorious work of manifesting Christ to the Gentiles, wherever the ships of

Anglo-Saxons sail, or their children dwell! Let but the commerce of England and America be sanctified by the influence of such a labour of love, and it would make their people messengers of mercy to the world. "Not Angles, but angels," said the good Gregory, twelve hundred years ago, when he saw the English youth for the first time in Italy, chained in the slave market. "Perhaps it was the mere alliteration of the words, and the poetry of the idea, which suggested the saying of the good old man; perhaps, like the high-priest of old, he spake not of himself, but by the spirit of prophecy. Whether it was inspired or not, the saying has not fallen to the ground. From that time forward the tree of the Anglo-Saxon race took root and flourished for a thousand years, the mighty trunk grew and shot upwards, rude and rugged perhaps in appearance, but of sound heart of oak within; and then it spread forth its branches to the uttermost ends of the earth, affording shelter and protection and support to the other families and less favoured races of mankind. The Anglo-Saxons have been accomplishing their destiny. Let us look upon the surface of our planet, dotted over in every direction by these Angli, or angeli, or messengers, *messengers hitherto of civilization and commerce,*

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at now, we hope, destined to become messengers of better tidings even than these, the future heralds of light and knowledge, about to work at some realization of the words, 'Peace on earth, and good-will to men.' "

The writer from whom I quote this very important and striking application of the words of the great Gregory, goes on to say, "This we believe to be the destiny, the mission, of the Anglo-Saxons. But in order to accomplish this destiny, to fulfil this mission, we must first become united in some things at least, if not in all. We must have some rallying-point. Division, dissunity, is the canker-worm that hinders the development of the blossom, and ravages in the bud the beautiful flower of our wide-spreading branch. We all disagree about our social institutions, we differ about our religious observances." Yes, there is the curse. It would not have been so had Hooker been heard, and had the first outgoings of evil will been calmed by his reason and earnest wisdom. It would not have been so if the Church had been obeyed. But the beginnings of strife are as when one letteth out water! First a leak, then a spouting stream; then a breach, and then an overflowing of ungodliness. It is to be regretted that men

not of the communion of saints, but of a brotherhood of literature and commerce. That never do ; the common bond must be a real one ; and he who dreams of any other, dreams of a rope of sand. Why not propose the Prayer-book as the common bond, and thus give unity to the race ; a unity not of fancy, but of fact ; of faith, of prayer, a unity constantly increasing and strengthening, and brought into daily exercise, but especially on " the Easter-Day of week." He who teaches one Anglo-Saxon to love the Anglo-Saxon Church, and to use the Prayer-book devoutly, does more for the race than can be done in any other ordinary way. When that takes hold of an American's heart, he learns to identify himself with the history



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there the brotherhood of race is felt, and the home and family feelings are warmed towards old England.

Who does not see how easily these characteristics of a race might be turned to the good of the world, and might make them indeed angels to mankind? Religious unity is that for which we must strive and pray. There is no other conceivable way of peace; for it is not literature, it is not commerce, it is not science that is to make men brothers; it is only the religion of Jesus Christ, and of His Holy Catholic Church, that can do it; for it was the Gospel alone that first published peace and good-will, and He that was "manifested to destroy the works of the devil," has declared that nothing less than the unity of the Spirit, and the bond of peace as He gives it through His Church, is able to make men love one another, and maintain a lasting brotherhood.

"Oh England! wheresoe'er thy churches stand,  
There on that sacred ground,  
Where the rich harvest of mortality  
Is laid as in a garner, treasured up,  
There plant the Tree of Knowledge! Water it  
With thy perpetual bounty!  
Be thou the hive of nations  
And send thy swarms abroad,

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For in the years to come  
Where'er thy progeny,  
Thy language and thy spirit shall be found,  
By whatsoever name the land be called,  
That land is English still, and there  
Thy influential spirit lives and reigns.

Train up thy children, therefore, in the ways  
Of righteousness, and feed them with the bread  
Of wholesome doctrine. Send thy swarms abroad :  
Send forth thy harmonizing arts,  
Thy stirring enterprize,  
Thy liberal polity, thy Gospel light !  
Illumine the dark idolater,  
Reclaim the savage ! Oh thou Ocean Queen,  
Be these thy toils when thou hast laid  
The thunderbolt aside :  
He who hath blest thine arms,  
Will bless thee in those holy works of peace !  
Father, Thy kingdom come, and as in heaven,  
Thy will be done on earth !"

That literature may be the handmaid of the Gospel in promoting Christian unity, and the evangelizing of the world, these verses of a truly Christian poet (and the most British of all poets) nobly prove. They are now quoted by a foreigner, whose spirit in thus addressing them to the land from which he received his blood, and above all his religion, attests the truth of what they express. And thus the humble literature of a tract may do something to promote and reproduce the *true spirit of fraternity* : but let literature, and

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art, and science, and trade, and polity, keep their humble place, as servants and helpers of the church of Christ, which deserves, and should command, the homage of all men, and which, in proportion as it receives that homage, is alone capable of completing the glorious work for which the Son of God was manifested to the Gentiles.

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I LOVE the Church,—the holy Church,  
The Saviour's spotless bride ;  
And oh, I love her palaces  
Through all the land so wide !  
The cross-topp'd spire amid the trees,  
The holy bell of prayer ;  
The music of our Mother's voice,  
Our Mother's home is there.

The village tower—'tis joy to me,  
I cry the Lord is here !  
The village bells—they fill my soul ;  
They more than fill mine ear !  
O'er kingdoms to the Saviour won,  
Their triumph-peal is hurl'd ;  
Their sound is now in all the earth,  
Their words throughout the world.

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And here—eternal ocean cross'd,  
And long, long ages past;  
In climes beyond the setting sun,  
They preach the Lord at last;  
And here, Redeemer, are Thy priests  
Unbroken in array,  
Far from Thine holy sepulchre,  
And Thine Ascension-day!

Unbroken in their lineage,  
Their warrants clear as when  
Thou, Saviour, didst go up on high,  
And give good gifts to men;  
Here, clothed in innocence they stand,  
To shed Thy mercy wide,  
Baptizing in the Trinal Name,  
With waters from Thy side.

COXE'S CHRISTIAN BALLADS. (AMERICAN

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.

# Tracts for the Christian Seasons.

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## SEPTUAGESIMA.

*'The Curse of Labour turned into a Blessing.*

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PROPER LESSONS : *Morning*, Genesis i. ; *Evening*, Genesis ii.  
EPISTLE, 1 Cor. ix. 24. GOSPEL, St. Matt. xx. 1.

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ONE part of the punishment which Adam's sin brought upon him, consisted of laborious work.

The truth, that we are sent here to do a work for God, is in various ways brought before us in the service for Septuagesima.

I. We read of God, working in the creation of the world, then of Adam's work in the garden of pleasantness and innocence. And when his will changed that into laborious work, God in His mercy did not forsake him. He planted, in due time, another Eden upon the earth ; a vineyard in which men might work for Him, that they might no longer spend their labour for nought, but, working for Him whose service is perfect freedom, might inherit an eternal reward. This vineyard is the Christian Church, of which we have a description in the Gospel. We read of the great Householder, going forth from morning till evening to hire labourers into His vineyard. And the history of these Gospel labourers is pre-

sented to us in the Epistle, in the life of St. Paul. He speaks of his labour in keeping under his body, and bringing it into subjection, lest the end should come, and his own work be found unfinished. But I am now going to speak more particularly of that toilsome work which the fall has entailed upon us all.

Now though we must all acknowledge that work is the appointed lot of all, yet we do not always acquiesce in God's appointment thankfully. The poor, for instance, will often murmur that they have to go on day by day, and year by year, in a ceaseless round of toil, tilling the earth which seems to begrudge her increase.

They are discouraged at looking forward to this even till death approaches; perhaps they are tempted to envy their richer neighbours, and to think their lives would have been happier if God had called them to a higher station. They forget that work, changed in kind it may be, but not lessened in amount, would still be laid upon them. Ten talents would cost them more anxiety to put out to interest for their Lord, and would entail a stricter account when He returns, than one talent. On the other hand, how constantly do those who are better off in this world's goods, regard their work, not simply as a duty, but as a

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means to get more comforts and luxuries, or honours, so thinking to reach that rest which the world is ever promising, never giving. Indeed it is very hard to look upon our every-day's task, as it what it may, as set us by God, and to be performed for God. We are all apt to be gathering flowers when we should be plucking up thorns ; to forget that our work is a token of our humiliation and sinful state, that we are driven from the garden of Eden, and need toil and trouble to school us into humility and resignation.

This may seem a very gloomy view of the matter ; but it is the object of this tract to shew you, my Christian reader, what a merciful appointment this law of work really is. In setting us to work to do as long as we live, God has enjoined what is wisest and best for us. This law was indeed at first a curse and a punishment, but all God's punishments are meant for our profit. No chastening for the present seemeth to be to you, but grievous : nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." (Heb. xii. 11.)

First, then, we may remark, that if man had been left to the free use of every good after he had fallen from righteousness and was unable to use his blessings aright, his case would have been

altogether desperate. His heart must have been utterly hardened and estranged from God. The very iniquity of Sodom is traced to her pride, her fulness of bread, and the abundance of her idleness. (Ezek. xvi. 49.)

But hard work is a continual daily teacher of humility. We learn, in our weakness and weariness, our anxieties, vexations, and disappointments, which naturally arise in our various employments, the lesson that we are only strangers and pilgrims here, only resting awhile from time to time, like the Israelites under the palm-trees of Elim, that we may pursue our journey towards the heavenly Canaan with more vigorous tread, and more earnest longing for our home. In this way God has converted His punishment into a means of awakening us to repentance, and of calling away our thoughts from this troublesome world to the land of everlasting rest. I do not mean to say that labour, whether of mind or body, does necessarily lead men's thoughts to a better life, for often it has the very contrary effect. Those who live hard-working lives have a great temptation to become wrapped up in their work, and to think of little beyond. Among the rich, they are apt to become selfish or ambitious; *among the poor, to live almost like the animals,*



without heart or care for the things of God. But these sad effects need not follow upon hard work if we go to it in a right spirit, and sanctify it by prayer. If a labourer or artizan make a conscience of saying his morning prayers with devotion, really praying for the grace of God's Holy Spirit, he may go forth to his work with little fear of its hardening [his heart; rather it will teach him humility and lowliness of mind, and so bring him nearer to Christ.

II. This leads us in the second place, to observe how God has in another way turned our punishment into a direct means of grace. For if our daily work be done to His glory, He accepts it as a sacrifice of obedience and praise. Whatsoever we do, even our eating and drinking as St. Paul teaches, (1 Cor. x. 31,) we may do to God's glory. The most trifling actions may shew what manner of spirit we are of, and by going through our work heartily as to the Lord, we may turn it into a daily worship of God, and make our whole life, as it were, a continual prayer. It is very necessary to understand this, because of a most common mistake or excuse which people make about the matter. Many do perseveringly turn God's sentence against themselves.

They say, " we cannot serve God as we

ought, because we have so much to do; our work keeps us away from God; our duties stand in the way of our devotions. It is all very well for those who have leisure to be religious, but from hardworking people, who rise early, and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness, it is vain to expect much religion." This is an excuse continually in men's mouths, and proves a continual blind to their conscience. But see what miserable grounds it rests upon!

Is it possible that God should command two things which cross and clash with one another? Can He, who knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are but dust, have bidden us in one part of His Word, "earn thy bread in the sweat of thy face," and in another "pray without ceasing," unless these two precepts, and others like them, be both capable of fulfilment? No, let us not believe that the worship of God consists only in long prayers, in public services in church, or in reading many chapters. Let us not think Sunday is the only day God can claim, and of that only a few hours, while six days are to be given up to worldliness. The very work He has appointed us is a means of worshipping Him, and of preparation for His presence. *If it be done with singleness of heart, as the ser-*

vants of Christ, our worldly employment is no hindrance in our path to heaven. Our trade or profession, the well-ordering of our property or farm, our family and household cares, these are the offering which, when seasoned with prayer and thanksgiving out of a pure heart, God will mercifully accept for Christ's sake.

What a grievous mistake then to imagine that a busy life must needs be an irreligious life ! Let the labourer work his hardest from morning to night ; the mother diligently train up her children ; the tradesman give his mind to his business ; the master diligently overlook his servants ; let each in his several calling do with his might whatsoever his hand findeth to do ; and there is a field before each for the exercise of all Christian graces, for patience, gentleness, contentment, charity, self-denial. A life of devotion does not mean a life of exemption from active duties ; but it does mean the discharge of those duties, be they sacred or secular, with a holy and heavenly spirit.

It is very true that greater retirement from the busy world, and longer leisure to be spent upon our knees in the closet is an inestimable talent. "To dwell in the house of the Lord for ever, and behold His fair beauty," was the one thing which David desired above all ; and to sit

peacefully at Jesus' feet, as Mary did, and hear His word, was called by our Lord Himself, "that better part." But it is when God has chosen this retirement for us by the leadings of His providence, and not when we have discontentedly run away from our worldly duty, that it is wise and safe to take it up. After all, it brings with it its own manifold responsibilities, and like the life of those who have taken holy orders, must be subjected to a stricter account at last.

In general, a life of hard work, whether of the hands or of the head, may be exceedingly blessed of God. It may remove a man from many temptations, such as wandering thoughts, unsettled purposes, and the still more dangerous lusts of the flesh which are sure to assault the idle. Steady labour is a protection from these, and an occasion of useful self-discipline. As our own sweet poet says,

"The trivial round, the common task,  
Would furnish all we ought to ask ;  
Room to deny ourselves ; a road  
To bring us, daily, nearer God.

"Seek we no more,—"

And be it remembered by all who would make their worldly calling an hindrance to religion, that holy Daniel had the management of

mighty kingdom, and the accounts of one hundred and twenty princes to overlook ; yet he found time to pray three times a day upon his knees ; and Martha who served, was not blamed because she served, but because she was “*cumbered*” thereby, and was tempted to think uncharitably of her who was called to a higher life.

“ There are in this loud stunning tide  
Of human care and crime,  
With whom the melodies abide  
Of th’ everlasting chime ;  
Who carry music in their heart  
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,  
Plying their daily task with busier feet,  
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat.”

(*Christian Year. St. Matt.*)

III. If there be a proof more convincing than another that a life of toil is the best life for such as we are, it is this : our Blessed Saviour Himself was pleased to lead such a life. As far as He could, so that no taint of sin should for a moment defile His soul or body, He graciously stooped to undergo every one of the effects and consequences of our sin. He took upon Him in detail the punishment which sin deserved. “ We indeed” bear it justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds.” He bore it in mercy, that He might help for us in all things, and render the bitter waters sweet by the healing wood of His cross. Now He furnishes a perfect pattern of toil and

devotion united ; of toil of body and toil of mind. For thirty years He lived a homely life at Nazareth, a country village ; and during that long time it would seem that He gave Himself to bodily toil. "Is not this the carpenter, the Son of Mary?" asked His countrymen in scorn. And when His public ministry began, is it possible to picture to ourselves a busier life than His? journeying, as He did, without ceasing, from place to place, on errands of mercy, thronged by crowds wherever He turned, even when, as St. Mark tells us, (ch. vi. 31,) He had retired to "rest awhile in a desert place: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat." Even this retirement was broken into, and an interruption which too often makes us feel vexed and hasty of spirit, only roused afresh His tender pity. (ver. 34.) "Jesus, when He came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd ; and," hungry and faint as He was, "He began to teach them many things ;" and when that busy day was now far spent, He departed, not to rest, but "into a mountain to pray." Such was His constant life ; days spent in active works of mercy, nights in solitary prayer.

Herein, then, consists the true blessedness of labour. At first it was a shame and reproach to man that he should be obliged to toil on the face of that earth which was created and filled with fruit for his sake. Now, if he will, he may bear his cross after his Lord and Saviour, "and there should be no greater comfort to Christian persons than to be made like unto Christ." He has removed the curse of labour, and converted it into a holy discipline. "Instead of the thorn has come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier has come up the myrtle-tree." Nay, in the letter as well as in figure, did our Blessed Lord bear the curse laid on Adam. "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground," the ground which was cursed for Adam's transgression. And the very thorns which that curse produced, were woven into a crown to pierce His sacred brow. We must therefore patiently and with thanksgiving bear our heavenly Father's correction; Christ bore it for our sakes; we must bear it for His sake, and for our own, for we need it much.

Christian reader, do you look upon your work in the light in which this little tract represents it? Have you ever indeed examined what work God has set you to do, or have you lived in

idleness and self-indulgence without a thought of this law of work which God has laid upon all His fallen creatures? If you know what your work is, let me ask you once more, Do you pursue it heartily for the Lord's sake? Do you make it your daily training for heaven? If indeed it be so absorbing as to keep you at a distance from God, if, for example, it be made your excuse for habitually neglecting prayer and the Holy Communion, then be sure it becomes at once unlawful work. Either it must be abandoned altogether, or there is some mistake, some inconsistency in your manner of following it, which must be detected and set to rights, before it can be blessed to your soul. Take heed lest a calling, innocent perhaps in itself, be made an occasion of everlasting injury to you. Believe me, he only is safe, who carries the thought of God about with him everywhere, and acts in all things as in His presence, working, while it is day, heartily, "as to the Lord and not to men," yet meanwhile labouring above all for "that meat which endureth unto everlasting life," labouring "to enter into that rest which remaineth to the people of God."

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.



## Tracts for the Christian Seasons.

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### SEXAGESIMA.

*The Seed which fell among Thorns.*

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PROPER LESSONS : *Morning*, Genesis iii. ; *Evening*, Genesis vi.

EPISTLE, 2 Cor. xi. 19. GOSPEL, St. Luke viii. 4.

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WHAT can be simpler, more level to the understanding of all men, than the images employed in the parable of the sower, which forms the Gospel of to-day ? A man goes forth to sow seed ; some falls by the wayside, some upon a rock, some among thorns, and some upon good ground ; and, as we should naturally expect, the birds eat the first, the second withers for want of deep soil to strike into, the third is choked, the fourth alone brings forth good fruit.

And yet we are bound to thank God that plain as it is in itself, it is still farther secured from being misunderstood by the explanation given by Christ Himself. "Blessed," He said to His disciples whom He was about to unfold its meaning, "blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear : " and surely this blessedness part is ours too, since for our instruction and

comfort the Holy Spirit moved the writers of the Gospels to record the explanation.

Now then let us with pure and humble hearts meditate upon some of the truths which it conveys to us.

You may observe that I pass by two cases of the failure of the seed: of that which fell by the way-side, and of that which fell upon the rock: the former denoting those who hear, but out of whose hearts the devil stealeth the word, lest they should believe and be saved; while the latter represents those who receive the word with joy, and for a while believe, but who in time of trial fall away. In both these cases the seed came utterly to nought: now it is to be hoped that of none who call themselves Christians, can so fearful a state as this of positive unbelief be asserted: for their profession at least testifies that they have not yet wilfully and deliberately rejected the word of God. And for this reason I prefer to fix our attention on the case of that seed which fell among thorns, because this image represents the case probably of most of us: I do not mean, God forbid, that in our hearts the seed is actually choked up beyond recovery, but it is most likely that in the heart of each there are *thorns* which, unless we are beforehand with

**them** and root them out, will at the last be found **to** have destroyed all the goodness of the seed.

The parable is found in the Gospels of St. **Matthew**, St. **Mark**, and St. **Luke**: and in each the image of the thorns is explained in words a little differing. By St. **Matthew** they are said to mean, "the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches:" by St. **Mark**, "the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things entering in:" by St. **Luke**, "cares and riches, and pleasures of this life." There is no real difference between them, but it is worth while to compare them, because we get a more complete view of the meaning of the image which thus comes to represent all affections and thoughts which have a tendency to withdraw us from the pursuit of the one thing needful. And so we see that from this temptation no Christian is free: the minds of all, high and low, learned and unlearned, are liable, without diligent use of God's grace, to become dead and cold to their highest interests, because either the cares of this world, or the lusts of other things, any of the objects of human desire, choke the word of God sown in their hearts. The temptation of those who are very poor, who live as it were from day to day, scarcely knowing this

week how they shall be fed, or clothed, or lodged the next, is to become too anxious and careful about the concerns of their bodies, and so careless about their souls. To them most peculiarly do the Saviour's words apply, "Take no thought (that is, be not anxiously careful) for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink: nor yet for your body what ye shall put on: is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns: yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye much better than they? . . . But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

The great snare of those who while removed from actual poverty have their own way to make in the world, is the desire they commonly have of raising themselves to a position of greater wealth and comfort: as they get on better and better, their affairs prospering, their desires enlarge also: and thus the one great business of life is lost sight of, while they run too greedily after that which cannot bring true peace or joy. These should be reminded of St. Paul, who tells the Philippians, he had learned in whatsoever state he was therewith to be content.

Men of business, again, are under a very strong temptation to allow their business to occupy all their time and thoughts, and so let the lamp of the Spirit go out, or at all events burn very feebly and dimly for want of oil.

The rich are perhaps the worst off of all in respect of this trial. Wealth has a peculiar power of hardening the heart: he who has every thing round him which his most idle wish can desire, who has never known what it is to want for any thing, is in great danger of becoming selfish, capricious and tyrannical, of being dead to feeling for his fellow-creatures. Never reminded of his dependence upon God for all he has, his heart is apt to be puffed up: all in this world is so comfortable that he is not driven to think of another. This is the reason why our Lord so often and so strongly warns us against the danger of riches.

We see, then, that men in all conditions of life are liable to have the good seed choked by thorns; and it is very important to bear this in mind; we are all too ready to escape the force of Scripture warnings, when they would touch our own case; the cases of others we see clearly enough. The rich man can see how much the poor are tempted to discontent and ill feeling to-

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wards those who are better off in this world's goods ; the poor again, how riches are likely to harden the heart, and deaden the spiritual affections. The busy man reflects how he who leads a more idle life is tempted to sins to which he himself feels no temptation, while he who has not much occupation except what he makes for himself, cannot but see the great danger to which press of worldly business exposes his neighbour. In fact, in matters of religion we too often reverse the rule by which we act in matters of temporal interest ; with respect to the affairs of this life, we all acknowledge and commend the wisdom which leads a man to mind his own business first, and then, but not till then, concern himself with that of his neighbours : but in matters of religion we commonly think first of our neighbours' cares, and then of our own ; indeed it is well if we are not so much taken up with theirs, as to neglect our own entirely. But the truth is, whatever we may be tempted to think, our trials are much more equal than they at first sight appear to be ; what is danger to one man, would not be such to another, and no one of us can so fully enter into his neighbour's case as to know with any exactness what are his trials and his difficulties. Besides we should remember that

it is not only cares of this world, and its pleasures, which may choke the heavenly seed ; all men have the same evil nature to contend with : the devil, we are told, is ever walking up and down, not waiting on this class or that, but walking up and down, to seek whom he may devour. And so frail are we that even our best and holiest earthly affections may become a grievous snare to us in this respect ; the parent who too dearly loves a child, the husband and wife who rest too much upon each other, will find that the holy seed is by degrees becoming choked.

It is to be noticed further, that the parable teaches us that all these hindrances to religion are quite natural : they come to us just as naturally as weeds or thorns spring up from the earth. The earth, though once cursed for man's disobedience, may yet, by the diligent care of man under God's blessing, be made to stand so thick with corn that the valleys laugh and sing : but we all know that without this care, the very finest land, though sown with the best of seed, will soon be covered with weeds ; and as it cannot support both weeds and the corn-crop too, the latter must suffer, for every weed that grows requires some of the nourishment which should be given to the good seed ; exactly so is

it with the heart of man ; fallen though it is from the image in which it was once created, yet by diligent cultivation, in reliance on the aid of God's grace, the fruits of the Spirit may be brought to strong and healthy growth ; but if this be neglected, other things will spring up in the rank soil ; will draw all the goodness of the heart away, and the seed sown will be unfruitful.

I need scarcely remind you how freely the good seed is sown in our own time and country. Dark as is the ignorance and heathenism which even yet rest upon some parts of our land, (God grant that we faint not till they be enlightened even as the rest !) yet to speak generally, we have the holy Word of God ; we have a true ministry to preach the word and to administer the blessed sacraments ; we have houses of prayer ; we have the gift and promise of the Holy Ghost ; we have the succour of holy angels, and many other lesser aids to a devout and holy life. The seed is sown far and wide : what account can we give, each for himself, of the manner in which it has been cultivated ? Have we allowed the cares of this world, or its pleasures, or the lusts of other things entering in to choke the seed ?

It is a solemn question ; one which no man can answer but for himself ; we have seen how



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great is the danger, that is, lest the seed should be choked: all are concerned to know how the mischief may be prevented, and too many have cause to enquire, how having been done it may be remedied and undone. A few words on this point, then, shall conclude what I have to say.

First, I will mention what is indeed quite plain to all: to be aware of our danger, or of our actual transgression, is a very important advantage: "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick:" he who is aware of his sin has made one step, and not the least important one, towards correcting it.

We should try then always to remember, that the cares of this world which are the portion of all, necessary and unavoidable as by God's appointment they are, have this constant tendency to draw us off from heavenly things; most of us cannot, if we would, withdraw ourselves from the active business of life: one day in seven God claims as His own, and gives to us to consecrate to His service only; but on the six we are to do all that we have to do: the labourer must go forth to his work, the man of business to his trade or his profession; only let them bear with them *this* warning, "The things which are

seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Next, it is plain that our danger arises from one of two causes; either we are too fond of the things of this world, or we are not fond enough of the things of the next. If the former of these be the temptation to which we are most liable, we should strive habitually to remember how soon these things must pass from us at the best, and in general how very uncertain they are: let the richest, or the busiest, or the most active man fall into real affliction, and how little comfort will things of this world give him. And in respect of the snares which the devil sets for us by means of our best affections, surely it were wise to gather from the events of daily life, from the sorrows of others, if sorrow be as yet unknown to ourselves, how suddenly these supports may be withdrawn by death, and how utterly desolate they leave the heart which has wholly rested on them. Severe as the blow is, yet it is doubtless often struck rather in mercy than in wrath, because the Almighty saw that what He gave as a blessing, was by His creature's folly turning to a curse. The stamp of frailness and uncertainty is set on all below: therefore says *St. John*, "love not the world, neither the things

that are in the world : if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

The other form of temptation follows directly from this ; he who loves the things of this world too much, must care about those of the next too little. Do we honestly desire to know whether this is our own case? we have but to ask ourselves one or two plain questions. Are we constant and regular in our devotions? Is our prayer set forth in God’s sight as the incense? The lifting up of our hands is it an evening sacrifice? Again ; what is the frame of mind with which we pray? do we carefully collect our thoughts and fix them on Him into whose more immediate presence we desire to come? Or is our prayer hurried, and mingled with the thoughts of our temporal concerns? Let us confine our examination even to the last time when we met in God’s house ; did we then really strive to offer the sacrifice, not of our lips only, but of our hearts? Did we worship in spirit and in truth? Or were our labour, our cares, our

business allowed to usurp that temple which is sacred to God? To pray well is one of the highest acts of the Christian life: he who morning and evening puts himself in communication with the unseen world is the least likely during the day to be forgetful of its concerns.

Remember then that the word of God sown in our hearts is to be our chief care in life, as it is the ground of all our hopes in eternity; that by reason of the frailty of our nature, thorns will spring up, and that it is our highest wisdom, as it is our plain duty, to watch for them and root them out. This is no light or easy task; but things hard to man are easy with God, and the aid of His Holy Spirit is promised to all who diligently seek it; "Ask and ye shall have, seek] and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." It may be great part of our year of husbandry has been wasted; who can say how much time will yet be given? Even now the reaper may be putting his hand to the sickle; what if when he come he find nothing.

# Tracts for the Christian Seasons.

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## QUINQUAGESIMA.

### *Charity at Home.*

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PROPER LESSONS : *Morning*, Gen. ix. to ver. 20 ; *Evening*, Gen. xii.

EPISTLE, 1 Cor. xiii. 1. GOSPEL, St. Luke xviii. 31.

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“ CHARITY begins at home.” Alas ! poor proverb, how sadly you have been misused and perverted to objects clean contrary to those which you really advocate !

These few words, which have long since become a regularly established proverb with us, are most true and agreeable to God’s word. And yet, strange to say, that old wily serpent, who has been cast out, but is not yet eternally destroyed, has persuaded mankind to draw them away from their natural meaning, and to build upon them lying errors, and to encourage themselves in vain deceits and ungodly practices upon the credit of their truth. He has made men believe that by virtue of this proverb, “ charity begins at home,” it is their duty to do sacrifice to self, to attend to ourselves first. “ Home ! ” sweet word ! What thousands of happy thoughts rush into the mind when this word is uttered !

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and perhaps as many melancholy thoughts! Reader, perhaps you are far from your home, and the remembrance of it fills you with regret, and you can hardly keep down the choking feeling that you may never see it again! Or perhaps the house of your childhood has been given up for a new scene, and a new home, which however dear to you from new associations, can never wipe out the remembrance of happy days spent under a parent's roof. Or it may be that the place you call "home" is no longer what it was. It was the centre of peace and joy and comfort: and now affliction has embittered its joys, sorrow has disturbed its peace, and you still occupy it, but amidst cares and distresses which make it more a wilderness than a land of love. I am sorry, my friend, to revive any feelings of grief and anguish in your heart: but for your own good, and for the good of others, bear with me while I suggest some thoughts, which if they had been entertained and acted upon in other cases, might have spared much agony.

What are some of the principal ideas which we associate with home, and which shed around it its peculiar charm? They are such as are connected with the family circle, and the ties of near relationship. We think of the fond wife

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busily preparing the evening meal against her wearied husband's return; the devoted husband discussing with his partner the treatment and the prospects of their several children. We imagine the young prattlers running to climb upon their parent's knee, or the anxiety and constant wakefulness with which the careworn mother sits night by night by the bedside of her sick infant. We see the hoary head of the aged grandfather hanging over his Bible, while he is explaining its sacred pages to the young boy who has just returned from running an errand for him. Or we see the group of mourners, sons, daughters, and grand-children, weeping around the bed from which the soul of the former mistress of the home has just passed away. Or again we call to mind the affection of brothers and sisters, the men propping up and strengthening the timid hearts of the weaker sex, while they in their turn having no sorrow that does not meet a response in the heart of their brothers, are eagerly catching every opportunity to supply a want, or soften down a care in those whom they feel to be their protectors and guides.


And where in all these scenes, where is room found for self? Self is unknown in a real family circle. Self is the bitterest enemy of home;



under the roof. Each one lives for the  
each one prospers and is in comfort, becau  
rest have care for him. But let him ce  
himself alone, let him begin to study his o  
terest, without regard or care for others, a  
has made the most cruel inroad on the bless  
of home, he has taken the first steps to c  
it of its real character, and consequently  
name. We see, alas, not a few instan  
families living under the same roof, an  
several members caring each one for h  
perhaps eating of separate loaves, partak  
different dishes, keeping indeed, as we ma  
distinct establishments. But here all i  
home is gone. There is no beauty in



Almost all of us have had a home or have a home at this time. There our charity must begin: there it should have begun years ago, and thence it should flow down in all directions. But alas! how many exceptions we find to this holy rule! Self is set up as the god who is to be worshipped in households; and self knows not charity, just as charity always banishes self. I grieve to say that I have known a house wherein lived a father with several grown-up sons, hearty, vigorous, in the full strength of manhood, and able to earn the full pay of men in their class of life. Instead of finding it their chiefest pleasure to provide in his old age for him, who in their infancy had single-handed fed, and clothed, and homed them all, they suffered him to exist on what his worn-out limbs could earn for himself; the last morsel which he tasted was the fruit of his own labour, no bit of supper did any of them, save one, provide him of their stores; they suffered him even under the roof which his toils had in former days furnished as their shelter, to perish unnursed, uncared for, with no comforts nor even necessities, no soothing words, no efforts, which cheer even when they cannot relieve; and yet more, permitted his unshrouded corpse to lie unburied, till the



instance,) who in the receipt of large earnings with a sickly wife and several little children depending on him, will take his money when it is paid, and lay out half upon himself before he reaches the door of what is called "home;" some spent on drink, some on his own clothing perhaps. He will then, maddened by liquor, abuse his miserable wife because there is not food enough, perhaps strike her in his passion, or what is almost worse, neglect one of his innocent children. They must go but half-fed to bed, and all day run about the streets, ragged, wicked, untaught, half-starved; their poor mother pines away of weariness, disappointment, vexation and grief, and all

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other pleasures, till she drove him in despair to turn her out of doors, and take another in her place, to peril his own soul and the souls of many besides him.

I have known a grown-up son living at home with his parents, and earning as much wages as his father, himself single, strong, and hearty, with no one to provide for, his father advancing in life, and with perhaps three or four of the young man's little brothers and sisters still dependent on him; I have known such a young man spend all his earnings on himself, except perhaps now and then a sorry sixpence given as a favour to the mother, which she with parental kindness unwillingly received from him whose first thought should have been to provide for her. How often have I heard children complain of the hardships of being expected to maintain their parents, and even contrive by some artifice to shift the responsibility from their own shoulders, and compel the parish or union to provide them sustenance.

Alas! alas! that these instances, revolting as they are, are by no means uncommon, but such as the experience of many of my readers will fully bear out. And that in a Christian land, where the great mass of the people belong to a

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branch of Christ's Church, which Sunday after Sunday rings in their ears that plain command of God, "the first commandment with promise," "Honour thy father and thy mother," which has taught them in their Catechism to "love, honour, and succour" their "father and mother:" which continually three times every year, bids them read and hear these words of St. Paul, "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (1 Tim. v. 8.) What an awful lesson does this teach us of the real condition in God's sight of hundreds and thousands of our people. They are positively worse than infidels, worse than the veriest unbelievers, worse than those who know not the name of God, nay, than those who scoff at it and despise it! Shame! shame on children, parents, wives, husbands, brothers, sisters, thus to bear the name of Christ, and deny it in their works; ah! and more than this, to live so unworthily of that human nature, and its kindly feelings, which God has given them! But how cheering, on the other hand, it is to pierce, though it is so difficult even for the minister of the Church, into the secret feelings of the few chosen ones of Christ, the few who really fear God, among

those who are intrusted to his spiritual charge. I have known here and there children who will deny themselves almost any comfort that may make return to their parents for those parents' care of them in days gone by. I have known those who have denied themselves the pleasure of contributing more largely to public charities, that they may make better provision for an aged or a needy parent. I have seen now and then the upright, honest son, who will not grudge to his father the bread which he has earned with the sweat of his own brow, and refuse to let him ask parish relief. I have known a son and daughter delay the season of their marriage, and consent to remain at home, instead of bettering their own condition by going out to service, that they may attend more assiduously to the wants of their family. Theirs is true charity. That is real Christian love, such love as God Himself exhibits towards us. For look ! what are the titles by which He seeks to endear Himself to us, and to make us comprehend His love, and learn what He expects of us ? Why does He call Himself " Our Father," but to make us feel that He is disposed towards us as a good father is to his little ones ? Why, but to shew us that as He treats us, so should we

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treat our children ? and as we ought to behave to Him, so we should, though in a lower degree, behave to our earthly parents. How can such parents and such children as I spoke of earlier in the tract, dare to address the good Lord God as “ Our Father,” when they live with a spirit so unfatherly and unchildlike. Why does He call the Church His bride, and speak of Himself as her husband ? (Eph. v. 25, &c. ; Rev. xix. 7, 8 ; Isa. liv. 5 ; Jer. iii. 14.) To teach us His love to us as members of the Church, and to teach us to love one another.

My Christian reader, have you a home wherein to reside ? Let your charity begin there. Make that home like that wherein Joseph and the Blessed Virgin dwelt, humble, yet highly exalted, scantily supplied with all save love. “ Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.” (Prov. xv. 17.) Make it like the home of Zacharias and Elizabeth, like that home at Bethany where the two sisters mourned for their brother Lazarus. Be you to your parents what the young child Jesus was at Nazareth ; and to your children what Abraham, and Hannah, and Joseph, and the Blessed Virgin were to their sons. Home will then be sweet ; it will be a castle and strong

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er, into which no jealousies, no slanders, no  
suspensions, no brawls, no hard words can  
er. The closed door of the humble cottage  
shut out all such rude sounds and thoughts  
his uncharitable world, and within the whole  
osphere you breathe shall be love. Your  
ie shall be in its degree a type of heaven :  
your abode therein shall be a meet prepara-  
for an eternal dwelling there : earth will then  
in truth a scene fitting you for heaven.

And your charity begun in this way will not  
p at "home." When you see a neighbour in  
nt or in trouble, will not you pity the houseless  
n, and relieve him as you can? If the mem-  
s of his family do not live in harmony, how  
nestly you will desire to bring them to peace !  
they neglect their duties to one another, how  
ger you will be to draw them to correct this  
ult, and to assist them in amending it ! As  
ur own peaceful home continually reminds you  
that blessed home, where is no sorrow, and  
m whence there is no parting, how will you  
mpassionate the forlorn condition of those hea-  
en or nominal Christians, whose ignorance or  
d life destroys all hope of their being made  
rtakers of that rest ! If you are brought to wit-  
ss the black guilt of those who are living "with-  
t God in the world," think you that your atten-

tion to home duties will have made you indifferent to these? Nay! the love which taught you first to love your parents, then your wife and children, will now make you, in spite of a selfish nature, spend yourself for them. Whence arise our devoted missionaries, our hard-working clergymen, our self-sacrificing sisters, our eager youths? Not from those households where each one is taught to labour for himself, but from those "homes," where self is forgotten, and every one thinks first of his duty to others. Who is the bravest in the field of battle? Who is the most faithful of domestic servants? Who is the most industrious of mechanics and of farm labourers? Who gives away the most out of his income, be that income great or small, to God and His poor? Why they who have been godly and loving in their homes, who have been wont to do all things in the fear of God, and in all worldly callings have learnt to be faithful to their Lord. Where indeed, I may ask, are the true principles of charity to be learned the best, and where the best carried out? In the household where God is feared and all love one another. Never was a truer word spoken, than "Charity begins at home."



# Tracts for the Christian Seasons.

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ASH WEDNESDAY.

*Fasting.*

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EPISTLE, Joel ii. 12. GOSPEL, St. Matt. vi. 16.

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WHILE our blessed Lord was in the world His disciples did not fast, because He was with them. Fasting would have been out of season and ill-timed. There is a time for all things, a time to rejoice and a time to mourn, and that surely was a time for joy. Though John Baptist taught those whom he prepared for Christ's coming to fast, yet it was but reasonable that Christ's coming should stop the fast; it was but reasonable that all signs of mourning should then be cast aside; men cannot rejoice and lament at once; and what could make the heart of man give itself up more entirely to joy than the sight and presence of a Saviour? That most blessed time of Christ's tarrying in the world was indeed to all watchful souls a feast of feasts; a feast it was to the eyes of those who beheld the Lord and believed; a feast to the ears of those

who lovingly caught His gracious words ; a feast to the souls of those who fed inwardly on His healing and saving truths. Who at such a time could sit in sackcloth and ashes ? Who at such a time could weep and lament ? Who could go heavily and put aside all pleasant bread ? Who could do aught but rejoice and sing, blessing the Lord of glory as He walked humbly among men, and overflowing with pious joy ?

But after His cross and passion, after His resurrection and ascension into heaven, were His followers to continue their unmixed joy, to cease still from fasts, to number that old discipline of the body practised by the saints of old among the old things that were passed away, abolished by the covenant of grace, and unnecessary for the Christian Church ? Nay, as for the first coming of Christ men had been taught to fast, so for His second coming was fasting laid on Christ's flock as a means of godly preparation. Now that Christ has gone, now that He has ascended into heaven, all our joy is to be mixed with heaviness ; and between our holy feasts there are to be solemn fasts, the latter witnessing to our continuing sense of sin, the former to our continuing joy in our release from the curse of sin by the power of Christ.

If you are in doubt whether we should fast or not, only turn to our Saviour's words, "The days will come, when the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days." Observe what He says, "then shall they fast in those days," that is, in all the days after His departure into heaven, in all the days which go over men's heads till His second appearing in glory, in all the days, such as these are, in which the Church waits for Christ and has not the joy or grace of beholding Him.

We cannot otherwise explain His words; and woe be unto us if we try to explain them away, because the flesh shrinks from fasting, because men like to eat, drink, and be merry, because they dislike any yoke of self-denial. "Then shall they fast in those days," this is a plain command to us who are living now; there stand the living words of Christ before our eyes; they are plain and clear and strong, so that they who run may read and understand. We must not push away such words, because they do not suit our views or tastes; neither should we try to make them square with our own ideas. Ought we not rather meekly and teachably to ponder on them in our hearts, to bend our views to the *will of Christ* there expressed, and to begin

to carry them out at once if we have slighted and made too little of them hitherto?

Remember that the Apostles acted on these words; they looked upon it as a needful thing to fast; their ears heard the words, "then shall they fast in those days," and when the Bridegroom went, they did fast. Is it safe to go against the Apostles? Can they have misunderstood Christ's words, and do we understand them better? Or was a harder service laid on them than on us? Did the Gospel give one set of duties then and an easier set of duties now? Can we say that our Lord required that they should fast, (as they thought He did,) but does not require us to do the same? Think of these things, if you doubt.

But some persons may say that "fasting" means "temperance," or a moderate use of the good things of life, a freedom from gluttony and excess, and that this sort of fasting is what Christians are daily to practise. It is true that all Christians at all times should abstain from excess of meat and drink, or from over-much care for meat and drink, but look to the example of the Apostles and to their practical interpretation of Christ's words; we know that they abstained always from all excess, that they used in strict

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and holy moderation all earthly things, that they cared not what they ate or what they drank, and with coarse fare and coarse raiment were content; but in so living, in so using godly moderation, did they think their Saviour's words about fasting were fulfilled? Not so; their ordinary abstinence, their ordinary moderation were at times deepened and increased; more marked and painful acts of self-denial at times they laid upon themselves; they speak of "fasting" as something beyond common daily acts of moderation, as something deeper still, reserved for particular times as an especial act of religious service, connected with especial prayer. Open your Bible and carefully read and weigh the following passages. "And when they had ordained them elders in every Church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord." "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer." Turn also to the fourth chapter of St. Matthew, wherein we are told of our Saviour's wondrous fast of forty days, by which He prepared Himself for His wondrous fight with the devil.

And now put all these passages of the New Testament together; take our Lord's words,

“then shall they fast;” take our Lord’s example when He fasted in the wilderness; take the Apostles’ words; take the Apostles’ example. Ask yourself with all candour and with all seriousness, whether as a true servant, a teachable follower of the Lord Jesus, you can with safety neglect to fast. It is true that men may fast, as the prophet says, “for strife and debate,” may make a show and parade of acts of abstinence, may go through it in a formal heartless way, wearing looks of gloom, without godly sorrow for sin within, without sincere abasement of soul and body before God; all this is wrong, and all this brings disrepute upon real godly fasts; but the hollow, hypocritical, showy, formal acts of hollow-hearted men, should not hinder the earnest and sincere from like acts done in godly sincerity; as well might we give up fervent prayer because of some men’s formal prayers. Our Lord speaks of this false fasting, but so far from taking occasion to condemn all fasting as useless and unprofitable, as no part of Gospel duties, He directs us into the true way and spirit of exercising this discipline, “When ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast.” I have only considered, you

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will observe, what is said in the New Testament on this subject, and I have far from exhausted all that is said there. I will however only further say, that when we leave Scripture and come to the earliest ages of the Church, we find systematic fasting practised throughout ; we find particular days and seasons soon set apart that all the members of Christ's body might keep fast together. It was looked upon as a duty laid by Christ on all, having as strong a warrant as that of prayer or almsgiving, and always accompanied with special prayer.

Now supposing that these passages of Holy Scripture shew us the duty and need of fasting, supposing these plain expressions of our blessed Saviour's will move us instantly to fulfil this duty without further questioning, we may derive further motives for fulfilling it from the use and nature of the thing itself. Let us consider some points upon the subject. First, then, every act of fasting is plainly a confession of our sinfulness ; it is an act of mourning for our sins ; we profess ourselves unworthy to take of the good things of the earth, and in token of our sense of unworthiness we choose less palatable and pleasant things ; we stint ourselves of pleasant food, as an act of self-chastisement for our

sins ; we as much as say, " O God, we are not worthy to take Thy choice gifts of food ; we have sinned ; we have sinned ; we will refuse all bodily enjoyment ; we will lessen all pleasure ; we will only take what is enough to keep ourselves in health ; we will put ourselves to self-denial to prove our sense of our self-abhorrence on account of sin."

Again, every act of fasting is a punishing of the body by which we are so often led away from God, which we have all too much humoured, which has too often been the master of our better parts, which is ever struggling for the mastery, which must be kept under by strong rules of discipline. Every act of fasting is a war against all sensual appetites, affections, lusts ; it is a crucifying of the flesh ; it is a confession that the flesh especially is full of lusts and needs to be kept under ; we hereby tread it under foot ; we refuse to pamper it or to minister to it ; we lessen even that which it might enjoy, to make more sure of our spiritual rule over it ; we exercise lordship ; we tame its wildness ; so to speak, we break it in ; we use the rod ; we starve it in some sort, as men do unruly animals which they wish to tame.

Again, every act of fasting is a practising of



self-denial that we may obtain self-command in any other things beside meat and drink. It is an exercise that gives us power over ourselves; it helps us in the great work of self-subjection to Christ's will; it is a sort of practising for war; we learn the habit of conquering our own will in things allowed, that we may be able to conquer our will in things not allowed. Supposing we like certain meat and drink, and we have strength of will enough to lessen the quantity of that meat and drink, or choose coarser fare, are we not likely by the exercise of the same will, already strengthened by that previous trial, to conquer our tastes when more important struggles have to be gone through? If we have kept down our liking in one case, we may keep down our liking in the other. We know how soldiers have to practise themselves in marching and in the exercise of their arms, to prepare themselves for real marches and real use of their weapons in time of war. Those particular movements across their drilling-ground, those particular exercises of their swords, do not of themselves save their lives; for it is time of peace, and they only march over a friendly field, and only beat the air; but do not these practisings give them skill and strength for real war, do

they not get power over their limbs and ease in wielding their weapons? So, if we lessen a meal or choose a less dainty fare, though the abstinence itself may have but little value, the fightings about these lesser things of meat and drink give us experience in fighting, accustom us to crossing ourselves, create a habit of self-command which can be applied to greater wrestlings, to the more fearful fights with our evil will, with the devil and the world. It may seem a waste of time when we see soldiers marching backwards and forwards over a field, firing their guns at flags and marks, drawing their swords when there is no enemy, slashing and hacking at the air; but if we wait to teach them how to fight till real warfare comes, their unpractised hands would be unequal to a victory; viewing fasting in this light, as a spiritual exercise, as a drilling of the body, we see its value. How is he likely to resist any great temptation who cannot conquer himself in the matter of a meal? And might not a person try himself in such a matter by way of preparation for the time of strong and sharp temptation?

Again, every act of fasting is an opposition to luxurious habits; and though we shrink from the word "gluttony," and think it cannot pos-

y be a sin lying on our backs, yet there is in  
 a great deal of gluttony in the world, a great  
 deal of care and thought about meat and drink,  
 great deal of fondness for good things. Among  
 higher orders how much is thought of feasts  
 and dinners, how much of dainty fare and choice  
 food, how much is spent and squandered on luxu-  
 rious living, on costly delicacies! How particu-  
 lar how fastidious, how extravagant many of the  
 higher orders are about their meals! How they  
 nourish their sensual tastes, and ransack all the  
 globe to get richness and variety of fare. And  
 even if we descend to men of middling means,  
 we find the same luxurious self-indulgent habits;  
 the same over-love and over-care for what they  
 eat and drink; much do they also make of their  
 feasts and dinners; much do they spend upon  
 their comforts. Now fasting is a remedy for  
 this self-indulgent, sensual spirit, this gluttonous  
 position which is so widely spread, though  
 the word shocks the ears of the self-indulgent;  
 fasting is a strong decided act on the other and  
 better side; we there condemn luxuriousness;  
 we there cast it from us; we there practise more  
 plainness, even abstinence; we there de-  
 prive ourselves of a multitude of ensnaring sen-  
 sualizing comforts; we endure hardness; we

cross our delicate greedy tastes ; we say plainly, that as members of Christ we should not indulge the flesh, but mortify and contradict it ; we set ourselves against even the beginnings of a gluttonous spirit ; we wage war against all tendencies to pamper the body in meat and drink.

Further still, fasting creates sympathy for the poor and needy ; it brings us close to them ; it raises fellow-feeling ; we in some degree feel what they have to feel ; our voluntary abstinence reveals what want is ; when we make ourselves to suffer want for the time, we learn what it is to suffer want continually ; it moves us to pity the destitute, for we are able more vividly to realize their state ; it brings us near their sufferings we see feelingly what they have to bear. It is a grand thing sometimes in our lives to feel what hunger really is ; it is a strong wholesome lesson to all who have any share of worldly means we often prate about charity and compassion we often give words of pity to the poor ; we often have tender feelings towards the poor creatures who lack bread ; but it is worth ten thousand sermons on charity and mercy, to feel real hunger once ; that is the great teacher, the true orator that pleads best for destitute and starving men. Thousands go through life with

out knowing what it is to be an hungered except  
 for an hour or so, when they have the certain  
 prospect of a meal; but if we would but some-  
 times choose to suffer hunger, and then ask  
 ourselves what it would be to have that suffering  
 without the prospect of a meal, or at best with  
 nothing but the prospect of a scanty insufficient  
 meal, then our human sympathies would be  
 touched and stirred within us; we should think  
 more earnestly about the poor; there would  
 be more heartiness in our thoughts; our thoughts  
 would lead us on to habitual, systematic, tender  
 care for those in want; and we should not be  
 satisfied with those short-lived outbreaks and  
 impulses of benevolence which glitter for a time,  
 as any extraordinary case of distress strikes fire  
 from the flinty or sluggish heart. There would  
 be something more real, more deliberate in our  
 pity, if it were from time to time renewed by  
 renewed acts of fastings, continually giving us  
 something like experience of poor men's wants.

And when once fasting has brought pity, it  
 works another work of love, for it supplies the  
 means of succouring the distressed. We are not  
 to save by fasting; we are not to economise;  
 whatever we gain by lessening the cost of our  
 meals on certain days throughout the year, should

be regarded as a sort of extra alms, a consecrated store to be devoted to Christ's poor members. Men spend so much on their meals that their alms are necessarily reduced ; if we lived more plainly, and at times practised positive abstinence, there would be larger means in hand for the relief and succour of the poor. As fasting narrows our own expenditure, it widens our powers of benefiting others ; that of which we deprive ourselves can go to poor men's meals ; our own scanty table places needful meat and drink upon the table of some destitute brother in Christ, and closeness towards ourselves becomes the instrument of generosity towards our neighbours. Thus fasting duly practised is a good almoner.

Some perhaps may ask at this point, if the poor are expected to fast at all, as they have ever to deny themselves in meat and drink ; they may doubt whether it is a duty for the poor. Of course, where God makes men to fast, the thing is in some sense done : He doubtless lays a daily fast upon the poor, He does not leave it wholly to them to choose whether they shall fulfil this duty ; He gives them little choice ; the yoke of abstinence is laid upon them, and their state of life is a continual fast. Doubtless

When that state of life, with all its experience of want and narrow means and hardness of times, makes fasting, in the strict sense of the word, less necessary for them. We must at once allow that it is of greater benefit and greater necessity to those who have enough and to spare, who have more than they actually need, and whose abundance tempts them to indulge fleshly tastes. But still I do not say the poor are freed from all modes or degrees of fasting; they should practise some kinds of self-denial which may benefit their souls, and help to tame their bodies to their Saviour's will, though they cannot reduce their food; just as weak and delicate persons of the higher orders who for health's sake are not suffered to lower or abridge their food, may yet have recourse to other kinds of fleshly, bodily mortification. Thus the poor on days of fasting might rise earlier from their beds or go to bed later, that they might find greater time for prayer and the study of God's Word; or they might perhaps choose some kind of work which they did not like so well as another kind of work. In short, a pious earnest mind will soon discover its own modes of self-denial which it is capable of in its own state of life, whatever it may be.

Lastly, we must remember that fasting is in Holy Scripture ever connected with prayer; its

Jesus our Lord. Fasting prepares and fits the soul for prayer by freeing it from the power of the grosser materials that cage it in, by making the body wait upon the soul, by lowering the body to its proper place.

And now, I pray you weigh seriously what has been said concerning fasting; cast away all prejudice; do not blind your candour whether it is enjoined by Christ or whether it is not enjoined; see whether it was practised by the Apostles or commanded by the Church or her branches in all times; study your Bible and the book in which you find the Church's voice on this subject; its true interpretation of God's Word. Fasting may have been much neglected here; it



## acts for the Christian Seasons.

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### FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

*Warnings neglected and their judgments.*

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PROPER LESSONS: *Morning*, Gen. xix. to ver. 30; *Evening*, Gen. xxii.

EPISTLE, 2 Cor. vi. 1. GOSPEL, St. Matt. iv. 1.

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How strange, perhaps many a one has thought, closely to connect "the time of wealth" with the hour of death" in the petitions of the Litany. Can it be that the time of "our wealth" is as momentous a period as the hour of death? Yes, reader, so it is in the judgment of the Almighty, for too often wealth brings spiritual death, too often with prosperity comes a death-like slumber over the soul. If any then doubt the propriety of their being thus linked together, let them ponder the history of Lot and his wife, brought before us in this morning's first lesson. Abraham and Lot had left all for the land of promise, riches increased, and Lot set his heart upon them. With his increase of wealth, how near came the hour of death; he stood in jeopardy every hour, and was only saved from instant death by the intercession of Abraham. Had a death-like slumber come over his soul,

that when warned by the angel to flee for his life, "he lingered" in doubt; so deeply had the canker eaten into the heart of his wife, that though forced out from Sodom with a holy violence, "her heart and her eyes were not but for her covetousness," and she perished in her sins. Well, then, as we "remember Lot's wife," may we breathe the petition, "In all time of our wealth, and in the hour of death, good Lord deliver us."

The destruction that overtook Sodom and Gomorrah is a type of that day which shall "come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up." The example of Lot is a warning to all how "they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." How nearly was this his case, and how narrowly was he rescued, saved as "by fire," with the loss of all his worldly substance. O Christian man, take warning, lest thou fall after the same example, lest in labouring for the meat that perisheth, running greedily after gain, thou forget that which endureth unto life eternal. It was in an evil hour Lot climbed

the mount, to make the choice, which should separate him for ever from Abraham: beware thou, in all thy choice of life, of walking in the ways of thy heart, or judging after the sight of thine eyes. The tempter, who made Sodom, with its vale below and its well-watered plain, “even as the garden of the Lord,” who made it appear so fair and captivating to him, would beguile thee too. He would persuade thee to take up thy abode here, and love this world. Let not a deceived heart turn thee aside, as it did Lot: look to the Gospel of the day; climb this mount with thy Saviour, see how the evil one spreads before Him in a moment of time all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; how fair they are, how glorious, how enchanting! Did the Saviour not stand by thy side, how should I tremble for thee, lest, following the ways of Lot, thy choice should separate thee from Him for ever! Hear how sternly He rebukes the prince of this world, “Get thee hence, Satan.” In His name, then, do thou the same; for what would it profit thee to gain the whole world, and lose thy soul in its overthrow? By His side thou art safe, and more than conqueror, for greater is He that is with thee, than he that is in the world. His death

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purchased thy life; see it restored to thee in type, in the person of Isaac unbound from the altar, of whom this evening's lesson tells us. The soul that sinneth it shall die, but God hath provided a Lamb for a burnt-offering, He hath not withheld His Son, His only Son from thee, and thy life is spared; beware then, lest thou return again to dwell in Sodom, that is, the world, for the men of that place are "wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." Ye have been bought with a price and are not your own; all is of God's free grace, who "commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Obey the voice which speaks to thee in the Epistle, beseeching thee, that thou "receive not the grace of God in vain," for He hath heard thee in an acceptable time, and now is thy day of salvation. To-day then, as the Lord passeth before thee in the services of the Church, as thou beholdest the wrath of the Lord poured out on Sodom, and the neighbouring cities, and seest in Abraham's sacrifice, that "God is a consuming fire," refuse not to hear the still small voice of His holy Word speaking to thy heart, "receive not the grace of God in vain," but obey it "while it is called to-day," leave the world, the flesh,

and the devil; cover not thy transgressions, like Adam, but be drawn towards Him by the cords of love; come out from thy cave of darkness; wrap thy face in thy mantle, and confess thy guilt. The voice of mercy speaks to-day; to thee, O man, treading the paths of death, does it say, "what doest thou here?" We, the messengers of God, knowing His terrors, would persuade you this day to harden not your hearts, for our message extends not to the morrow. It may never come; it will not come to thousands; to-day is the last day of grace to many a sinner, to-morrow God's wrath will be poured out upon them. What if the day, wherein thou readest these pages, should be thy last? One day will be: so "while it is called to-day," we warn you by the example of Sodom and Gomorrah, of that destruction which shall come upon all things wherein thy heart delights, and of that eternal punishment which will surely overtake all who live ungodly.

See how suddenly destruction came upon the men of Sodom, and be warned of the danger of delaying thy repentance; behold the vengeance which overtook Lot's wife, and press forwards to the everlasting hills from whence cometh thy help. Awful instances are the former of the fearfulness

of falling into the hands of the living God ; sure proof does the latter give, that the backslider in heart shall not go unpunished.

The overthrow of these cities, and the desolation which has come upon the plain of Sodom, have become a by-word. Babylon, Moab, Edom, Tyre and Sidon, each in turn warned by their fate, and refusing to repent, have drunk of the cup of God's wrath. "Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency," "wasted with misery," has been overthrown, never more to be inhabited from generation to generation. "The Arabian" fears to "pitch his tent there," neither dare "the shepherds make their fold;" for "the wild beasts of the desert lie there," and "the satyrs dance there." Suddenly, in one night, destruction came upon Moab ; she was laid waste and brought to silence, and "the vine of Sibmah" became as the vine of Sodom. Edom has been bathed in blood by a sword from heaven, and as in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, no man abides there, so none of her sons dwell therein ; from generation to generation her lands "lie waste, none shall pass through it for ever and ever."

Tyre and Sidon, whose "merchants" were "princes," and their "traffickers the honourable

of the earth," have been laid waste, and the fisherman spreads his net there. Capernaum, once "exalted unto heaven," Chorazin and Bethsaida, in which so many mighty deeds were done, in like manner have perished with their memorial. Jerusalem, "the perfection of beauty," "the joy of the whole earth," has long ago been overthrown as in a moment, and the punishment of her iniquity was greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom. And where are the cities of the seven Churches, once the glory of Christendom? Their place scarce knows them; for the Lord hath covered them with a cloud in His anger, and cast down from heaven unto the earth their beauty; for if the mighty works, which were done in them, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

And thou, O man, who knowest the judgment of God, that His wrath has been thus revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, thinkest thou that thou shalt escape? Pharaoh and his host have perished; Korah and his company been swallowed up; Ananias and Sapphira struck dead; Herod smitten, and eaten of worms; Lot's wife still remains a monument of wrath to all generations: yet thou, and every one who doeth evil, sayest, where is the God of judgment?

Did space allow, we could, leaving the Holy Scriptures, point to the overthrow of nations and cities, from the days of Herculaneum and Pompeii until now, and trace out the iniquity which worked their ruin ; or confining ourselves to England, we could shew abundant cause to fear, that our "cry hath waxen great before the Lord," for hath not the angel of the pestilence come down to see whether we have done according to that which hath come up before our God? and of a truth, except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a remnant, except a greater than Abraham had interceded for us, "we had been as Sodom, and been made like unto Gomorrah." Come with me, and with thine eyes thou shalt behold and see the reward of the ungodly. These new-made graves : who slew those they cover? for they died not the common death of man :—the cholera of 1849 ! Silent preachers are they to thee, to be "ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." What a tale each could tell ! the history of but a few I know. There, beneath that turf, lies one, who had no thought beyond this world : he was busied in the factory : the angel of death met him there, and before night he was a corpse ! *That spot marks the drunkard's grave : he was*



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loud in his godless merriment ; two short days and the hand which stretched forth the cup, and the tongue which uttered oaths, were powerless in the grave ! There lies one, the sin which brought down vengeance on his head yearly slays its thousands, it is the seducer's grave ; for months he plotted the ruin he accomplished : the same night he flung himself on his prayerless pillow : he awoke the next morning, but it was in eternity ! Here rests the victim of his lust : the suddenness of his end struck her with awe, she sickened and died : her sad fate would make one weep : it is told in the inscription on the head-stone, " A broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." And reader, while I write these pages, the bell declares the departure of another soul. He, whom it " passes" for, was young in years, but old in sin : little thought I, as I wrote, " to-day is the last day of grace to many a sinner," it was such to one so close to me ! he rose this morning, well as you are ; went to his work at the factory, a wheel caught his clothes, and dragged him into the machinery, where he was instantly dashed to pieces ! " The wicked shall not live out half their days." And how old art thou in sin ? O be not deceived, God is not mocked, *what thou sowest that shalt thou also reap.*

your sins be as scarlet, they shall be  
as snow; though they be red like cri  
they shall be as wool." Turn thee then  
live, for why shouldest thou die? God ha  
pleasure in the death of a sinner. It i  
His desire to give thee up, to "make th  
Admah," or "set thee as Zeboim." "Mine h  
said He, "is turned within Me, My repe  
are kindled together." "Go," saith He t  
ministers, "and proclaim, Return thou back  
Israel, and I will not cause Mine anger t  
upon you, for I am merciful, saith the Lord,  
will not keep anger for ever, only acknow  
thine iniquity that thou hast transgressed a  
the Lord." Arise, take with thee words  
sav. "Father. I have sinned against heave

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Reader, do I seem unto thee as one that  
beth, when I say unto thee, "Up, get  
out of this place, for the Lord will destroy  
" Since the fathers fell asleep, do all things  
unto thee to continue as they were from the  
beginning of the creation? Art thou tempted  
ask where is the promise of His coming?  
What then mean the commotions in the world?  
The powers of heaven are shaken, nation is  
fighting against nation, and kingdom against  
kingdom, the tribes of the earth mourn, for  
famines and pestilences that have come  
upon them, and are in perplexity, and dost thou  
linger?" when the angel of the covenant would  
be merciful unto thee, in bringing thee out?  
These are His words, "Haste thee, escape for thy  
life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in  
the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou  
be consumed." Say not, "I cannot escape to  
the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die."  
The Lord giveth power to the faint, and to them that  
have no might He increaseth strength; wait upon  
the Lord and He will renew thy strength; thou shalt  
not be weary; thou shalt walk and not  
faint; flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope  
set before thee as the anchor of thy soul; forget-  
ting those things which are behind, reach forward

unto those that are before ; press onward to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus ; run not as uncertainly, strive not as one beating the air ; lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset thee, and look unto Jesus the author and finisher of thy faith. Lift up thine eyes unto the land from whence cometh thy help ; the covenant of God saith, “ unto thee will I give it : ” rest not then ; dream not of resting. “ Remember Lot’s wife,” plead with Him, that His presence go with thee ; think not of moving on without the pillar of His guidance, lest thy feet stumble on the dark mountain, and while you look for light He turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.

Why art thou so cast down, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me ? with the Lord there is mercy, with Him there is plenteous redemption, and He will redeem thee from all thy sins. Leave the world, go forth unto Jesus without the camp, bearing His reproach ; for here thou hast no continuing city : hereafter there will be a rest for the people of God.

# Tracts for the Christian Seasons.

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## SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

*Esau's voice of warning.*

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PROPER LESSONS : *Morning*, Gen. xxvii. ; *Evening*, Gen. xxxiv.  
EPISTLE, 1 Thess. iv. 1. GOSPEL, St. Matt. xv. 21.

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GOD'S blessings are for those who value them ; they are given generally to all in Christ's Church, and by general means, which all alike may come to, and call their own ; but it is only when we form a due estimate of God's spiritual gifts, and see how very precious they are, that we shall enjoy them and be at pains to keep them. More than this, God takes away His blessings from those who set no store by them ; "take away the talent from the unprofitable servant and give to him which hath ten talents," is a sentence which has been repeated by God over and over again in the course of His providence ; it was declared in the call of the Gentiles, and in the rejection of the Jews ; the Jews were invited to the feast of the good things of the Gospel, they cared not for the invitation, and they who

came sat down in coldness, and unbelief; the Gentiles sought humbly and eagerly for the least token of God's favour, they begged for the crumbs which fell from their Master's table, and so what they valued was taken from the people who valued it not and given to them.

It was repeated in the case of the younger and elder son of the patriarch of old, as our Church teaches us in the first lesson of this morning's service; Esau had the birth-right, but he despised it; and so when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; it was taken away from him, and he could not regain it; he thought he could have regained it, but he did not seek for it in the right way, with a humble and broken spirit; it was too late, he found no place for repentance; the blessing was taken from him who despised it, and given to him who knew its true value; it was taken from the profane man, and given to him who had faith to see that it was a precious and divine privilege.

No doubt there are some, let us hope an increasing number, who grow up to know the exceeding blessedness and richness of their birth-right as baptized Christians, who look upon their union with Christ, the remission of their sins

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by His blood, and the presence of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, as a treasure really worth having; such persons live but to guard these best gifts, and to fulfil the work for which such a mighty grace was afforded them. But these thoughtful ones are few in number compared with those who look down upon their spiritual birth-right. All baptized Christians are gifted with this promise of eternal life; it is their inheritance as children of God. Most of them however at one time of their life think lightly of their heavenly portion; there are more like Esau than Jacob in the world, and Christ's ordained ministers must set before them their danger; they must tell them what it is which they despise, lest if Esau's course be theirs, they should one day utter with him the exceeding bitter cry.

Who does not pity Esau? who does not see in him much that all are wont to admire? look at the picture which Scripture gives of him, look at it well, for it is the picture of many others! Manly, brave, hardy, active, full of life, spirit, and energy, ready for any service of danger or daring, he was just the man to make his way in the world, and to take the lead among his fellows; and there was much that

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was kind and open-hearted in his character; his anger had been hot against Jacob, and he thought to slay him, but the iron did not rankle in his heart, he forgave his brother after a time, and though he saw Jacob with the birth-right which once had been his, and the blessing which might have been his own, he did not resent his father's preference; Esau was the first to run and meet him and embrace him, and to fall on his neck and kiss him; rejoicing to meet his brother once more, he cared not for his gifts, "I have enough, my brother, keep that thou hast unto thyself;" he thought not of any advantage he might take or gain over his brother; when they met, all bitter feelings left his soul, the past was forgotten, the early flame of brotherly love burnt up within, and his whole thought seemed to be directed to his brother's welfare, his one consideration was that his brother should take no harm. Why then does Esau hold such a fearful place in Scripture? Why is he, so bold, brave, and generous, put before us as one whose course we are to fly from, and for whose doom we are to tremble? The answer is simple; he lived for this world and for the enjoyment of the present; he cared not for any of God's heavenly blessings; he



made the most of his bodily powers, he used and improved them, he laboured for himself and his own pleasure, but he did nothing for his God ; he had not the fear or the love of God before his mind, and so no restraint or check came between him and the indulgence of all his desires. St. Paul tells us that he was a fornicator ; thus he gave way to his lusts ; he thought much of his food ; he could not bear to feel the least sinking for want of support ; rather than delay satisfying his hunger for a single moment, he parted with his birth-right ; thus he gave way to his appetite : when he saw his brother put before him, he at once thought of slaying him ; thus he gave way to his temper. In every affair of his life he shewed that he had no anxiety for God's favour, that he set no value on God's blessing. Marriage, which may be the beginning of a higher and holier walk, was any thing but this to Esau ; he cared not to cast in his lot with God's people ; having no faith to see that there was any thing worth having in this privilege, he joined himself with the children of idolatry, he took his wives of the daughters of Canaan ; this fatal step was " a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah ;" but believer and idolater, God's people and His enemies, holy and

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profane, the world and the Church, were all alike in Esau's eyes.

Time as it went on did not bring Esau any nearer God, or make him more heedful of God's gifts, but it made him more worldly-wise; he mourned over the birth-right he had sold; he grieved to think that he had lost the double portion of his father's goods, the highest place in his family, and the rule over his brethren; he wished to regain what he had lost. Isaac seemed to favour his plans, so that when Esau went out to hunt for venison that his father might bless him before he died, he thought that by receiving the blessing he would recover the birth-right also; he went out in hope, he returned in the confidence that he might have what once he had despised, but he came back to find out the dreadful truth, that he was rejected, that Jacob had been before him and had gained the blessing as well as the birth-right. Esau tried to make amends for the past, but as he sought only a worldly good, he did not do it in the right way; he did not come back as a penitent; his was a mock of repentance, it had no humility, no sincerity, no charity; he did not come back as a penitent but as a son; he did not feel himself a sinner; the remem-

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brance of an ill-spent life did not bow him down, or the burden of his sins weigh heavy on his soul ; in the judgment that befell him, he did not see his just reward, or confess that he had deserved to be cast off ; he grieved, bitterly grieved for the loss of the blessing, but not for the sins that had caused the loss. Wretched man that he was ! he failed in the only thing which on our part can atone for past sin ; and now it was too late, the gift of the Lord was denied him for ever ; the blessings of this life were promised, his dwelling was to be “ the fatness of the earth and of the dew of heaven from above ; ” but the blessing of God’s favour was taken away from him, and he never recovered it ; “ he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears ; ” “ he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, Bless me, even me also, O my father ; ” but the day of grace was over.

Esau’s doom speaks in startling words to many now ; God grant that they may take warning from his unhappy end, lest one day it be theirs : it speaks to the young, to those who are in strong health and high spirits, who are just entering on life, and rejoice to feel *themselves their own masters* ; it bids them,

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in the words of to-day's Epistle, "abstain from fornication." God requires the vigour of your youth, the spring of your strength; do not give it unto harlots; do not "defile the temple of God;" if you do, you will lose your birth-right as members of Christ.

It bids them not to care too much for their appetite; it is pleasant to be full and to feel the heart made glad, but meat and strong drink have ruined many before and since the days of Esau; thousands for these pleasures sell their birth-right.

And Esau's example is a call to the young to fly from spiritual sloth; we must be zealous of God's honour, keen in the pursuit of good, active and energetic in the work of the Lord; take heed of your soul, guard the gift which Christ gave you at your baptism, watch over it and hold it fast; terrible enemies are around you; they do not slumber at their work, they will rob the slothful man of his heavenly birth-right; go through life with a constant anxiety by every means to keep God's favour and his blessing; it is easy to lose them, hard, very hard you will find it to get them back.

And while the young should, if they are wise, begin life with a zealous care over their spiritual

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blessings, for fear they should lose them, all must look diligently at the past, and find out whether they have lost them; and if they have done any thing to forfeit their birth-right, they must at once seek to recover it: it will not come back of itself when we leave off the sins that robbed us of it, it must be regained. Esau thought that God's favour would come back of itself, but his hope was full of deceit; let us learn from him that there is a place in the road of death, where there is no turning, that there is a time when grace is past. If you have given way to the lusts of the flesh, if you have indulged your appetite and sinned in strong drink, if you have been careless of the means of grace, and "loved the praise of man, more than the praise of God," make haste to retrieve your loss, put not off for a moment the effort to retrace your steps; but you must not come back like Esau to claim the blessing as a matter of course or of right, you must seek it in true, genuine, heartfelt repentance; you must search out your sins, or else, though they may have been committed in boyhood, they will be sure to find you out one day or other; you must judge yourselves for fear you be judged and found wanting. *Satan your accuser does not forget any of your*

sins; take heed that the memory of them does not pass out of your mind; many a man leads a better life, and yet does not repent; time deadens his passions, and worldly wisdom keeps him from a gross life, but the stain of sin is still on his soul; he will not humble himself to confession; he will not break his proud spirit, and so it still remains; it will remain until he comes to his Redeemer and the Fountain of His blood in sorrow and penitence for the sins by which he forfeited His favour.

Repentance is not a mere feeling, it is a habit; if it is to be of any avail it must be shewn in acts; in acts of self-denial and self-chastisement that we may test its reality, in trying to make amends for the past, for the evil we have done to others, for the injury we have inflicted on the cause of religion and of God: often when we have broken the chain ourselves, we see others borne away captives, whom we have led into the snare; we must make amends for this, and especially to those who have suffered at our hands.

The blessing we now seek is remission of sins through Christ's blood; the Church, like Isaac of *old*, bids us come and receive it, but we must come in deep sorrow for sin, in humble con-

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lission of sin and in earnest prayer for forgiveness, for there are two equally great dangers in repentance. 1. You may be satisfied too soon : you may fancy that you have done enough, when you have only begun to repent ; you may think that the warfare is over and the victory gained, and peace of mind assured, when you have only just got into the fight : perhaps yours is only a fancied repentance after all, perhaps you have not proved your conscience severely ; crimes of youth sometimes pursue the criminal even to hoar hairs ; there may be “ some root of bitterness ” still in your heart, and your repentance may not have gone deep enough to reach it ; do not be satisfied too soon ; most persons are ; and this is why there are so few true penitents ; their spiritual growth is stunted, they bring forth the fruits of the Spirit in scanty measure, because tears of repentance have not flowed long enough to soften the hard soil ; the heart is not broken, the sense of sin is not keen, the recollection of it does not damp their spirits, they are satisfied too soon. 2. You may put off repentance till it is too late ; repent at once, you may not have any time but the present ; delay is dangerous in every thing of importance, much more so in a business, for which as years go

on, we shall have smaller powers, and shorter time, and a feebler inclination. Life is very short for all that we have to do in it for God; if we have to make up for lost time, life is doubly short; delay is often ruin, it is so more frequently than not; death is oftentimes rapid in its approach, and the mind is weakened and incapable at the last; very few see death gradually draw near, and keep their full senses to the end, so that with most, if repentance is put off, the season is lost altogether; repentance when too late is no repentance at all; hell is full of would-be-penitents, who begin to repent now that grace is over, and find, like the foolish virgins, that they are shut out from God's mercy. If you are tempted to delay your repentance, think of the unhappy Esau; if you want something to rouse your energies, and quicken the steps of your repentance, think of his exceeding bitter cry; it will be of little bitterness compared with that of lost souls; his sorrow will be small indeed when put by the side of that despair, which they will feel who see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob enter into the kingdom, and they themselves cast out.



## Tracts for the Christian Seasons.

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### THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

*The strong man cast out.*

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PROPER LESSONS: *Morning*, Gen. xxxix.; *Evening*, Gen. xlii.

EPISTLE, Eph. v. 1. GOSPEL, St. Luke xi. 14.

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THE body of man is often compared to a house in Holy Scripture, because it is the soul's dwelling-place; in this way Job speaks of "houses of clay," and both St. Paul and St. Peter describe it as a tabernacle or tent, because it lasts but a short time.

But the soul itself is also considered as a house, and a very little thought will shew why. Man is made partly of body, partly of spirit; and if any one examines that part which is spiritual, he will see that it contains within it a person, the same whom we call self, who lives within it, as a master occupies his house. The house itself is divided into two parts, one which we call the mind or reason, the other the heart or affections, these are as it were the chambers of the house, and they are both fur-

nished with their proper goods; but the man himself, the master of the house, lives within them; they belong to him; he has the power to manage the whole building and all within it at his will and pleasure.

And so far this spiritual house is like other dwellings; but there is this difference, that the owner of it did not and could not make it for himself; he was placed in it before ever he was conscious of any thing; when first he was able to think, he found himself there. We know that "He that built all things is God," and none but God could have built such a house as man's soul. God then was the Architect, He made both the outward and the inward habitation, and in the centre of it He placed the master, the man himself, and gave him power over it.

But when God did all this He did it for a certain purpose; it was that this house, the soul of man, might be a habitation for Himself; it was His will to dwell in this house together with its master, man; He rejoices to be present with all His works, and most of all with man His last and greatest. And so at first while man continued as perfect as he was made, his Maker resided with him continually. And even

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When Adam had opened the house to God's enemy, so that it was no longer fit to receive Himself, He did not give it up, but even then He promised after a time to restore it to its perfect state, and to return to it again. And because He had so promised He was pleased, even before He had restored it, to visit some who were willing and fit to receive Him. Thus He talked with the patriarchs Enoch, Noah, and Abraham ; and with the prophets Moses, and David, and Daniel: all these "walked with God," but as yet God appeared to them only from without, out of the cloud, out of the fire, or out of the whirlwind, and sometimes by His angels, but not within themselves. At length He pleased Him to restore the house itself. His own Son took man's nature upon Him, and became a perfect man, of a reasonable soul and man flesh subsisting. His very name was Emmanuel, or "God with us." From that time forth all the souls of all mankind were once more fitted to receive their Maker ; His enemy was cast out of the house, and once more He was pleased to dwell among men, and no longer without, but within their souls, the habitation which He had chosen for Himself. First, on the day of Pentecost He came as He had

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promised, to dwell with the twelve Apostles "and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost;" and the same day three thousand souls received Him also in their hearts and minds. Thus the breaches of the house were repaired, and the King of Glory entered in.

And so it is now. Every baptized Christian's soul is an habitation of God, a temple of the Holy Ghost. God is not only present every where throughout the world, not only where "two or three are gathered together in His name," but present with every one, nay, within him, in his heart and in his mind. Every baptized Chris-

tian has greater honour than was paid to patriarchs and prophets, for he is made a new creature; he is made the abode of God, the dwelling-place of the Holy Ghost; the Spirit dwelleth in him, after having given him a new nature in Christ.

As surely as the Lord vouchsafed to eat and drink with Levi and Zacchæus, with the sisters at Bethany, and the disciples at Emmaus, so surely has He come to all Christian souls, "not stranger-like to visit them, but to inhabit there." He has come according to His promise, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and We will

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come unto him, and make Our abode with him."

But there is this difference between Christians now, and Christians then: the Apostles were men full-grown when they were "filled with the Holy Ghost;" and when on that day of Pentecost He entered into three thousand souls, each one was able to declare his faith, and to open his heart and mind to receive His presence. But now that He is at peace with man, He does not wait even for this. He takes possession of the house within us before we are aware of His presence. Most of us were baptized in our infancy, when the house itself was only newly built, and long before the master of it, the person whom we call self, was able to act or think; and even then before we had even so much as called upon His name, and invited Him, He came to us of Himself: He washed the house with a new and heavenly washing, He made it fit for His presence, and set His seal upon the doors, and came and dwelt in it and took possession of it. And He came to us beforehand for this reason, to declare His favour and good-will towards us, trusting that we would afterwards receive and entertain Him willingly, when we should be able to understand

His goodness. Afterwards in Confirmation increased His first gifts, He fixed Himself strongly in the house.

And so after Confirmation, if we come to walk with God, we continue to be temples of the Holy Ghost; as St. Paul "His house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of hope firm to the end." If we have continued ever to trust in His favours and to rejoice in His presence, He has certainly not departed from us. But alas, like Adam, we too have an enemy as well as a Friend; and our adversary the devil, has been striving ever since the fall of man to get possession of the house for himself. Though we gave up Satan in Baptism and Confirmation, Satan has never given up us: he found his way into paradise, he had his altars even in the temple of God, so is he ever besetting every Christian's soul. He never ceases to break in, by force or by fraud, sometimes rushing upon us as a lion, sometimes creeping in as a serpent. And because he knows he cannot break in by his own strength, God's Spirit defends the house, and never *unless* man himself provoke God to fight for *its* defence; he tempts him to do this, to

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and displease his heavenly Guest to leave him to his own shifts; then, when he has only man to deal with, he finds the door open to him so easy to be forced; he enters in and dwells here too, and what was once the house of God is in danger of becoming soon the abode of Satan.

So, it must be feared, it is with very many who once made over their souls to God; they have not kept out God's enemy. He has made his way into their innermost chambers, and now he is striving for the mastery that he may have the whole house to himself. This is the season of greatest peril: for if he prevail over us, if he make the master of the house wholly his friend, his first Friend, God's Holy Spirit, will depart from him. He will not dwell with Satan; they cannot live in the same house, they cannot from their own nature. He who is all-holy cannot live with one that is all-wicked, He who is all-good cannot live with the author of all evil. As St. Paul says, "what communion hath light with darkness, and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" Neither is there room in the house for both; for both require possession of the whole; God would have the whole soul kept sacred to Himself of right and justice,

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because He is the Maker of the house and its owner too; therefore He is the Guest who ought to be received; and He will not have another preferred to Himself, for He is jealous; and He justly expects to receive all that duty and service which was promised and vowed to Him alone, which is due to Him also, for His great love in creating us afresh through Jesus Christ. And Satan also would have the house wholly to himself, out of malice and hatred, because he is God's enemy, and would undo His work; and because he hates God's friends, and would destroy the owner of the house and his dwelling too. And so the master of the house cannot please both. He cannot give his whole duty and service to more than one; he cannot pay the first honours to two at once; he cannot make two at once sole master of his heart and of his mind. If God is uppermost in the closet of his thoughts, Satan must give place. If Satan reigns in the chambers of his affections, God's Spirit will depart thence. We cannot serve God and mammon.

But how is Satan, the strong man, to be quite driven out, and God wholly served, since we have tried to serve both? "How can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods,



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except he first bind the strong man, and then he shall spoil his house." But who shall bind this strong man? as St. Luke says, it must be one "stronger than he," stronger than Satan, and this cannot be man. He must seek help from God in all appointed ways. He must seek it, first, by sorrowing for grievous wrongs which he has done to Him in time past, and promising amendment; he must make known his hearty desire to restore his heart and mind wholly to Him to whom they belong; he must promise and vow once more to keep his spiritual house sacred to Him alone; and he must once more renounce God's enemy and pray for help to overcome him. In a word, he must repent and pray.

But as man's enemy is spiritual, so must his warfare be. His armour is spiritual. "The breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith;" with these he will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. Now these "darts" of the devil are either evil thoughts, or evil desires, and these he raises in our hearts or minds by setting before us something or other which we love, but which God hates, something either of the world or of the flesh. This is Satan's mode of attack, and man must prepare accordingly. To

quench these fiery darts ; to do this he must be upon the watch over his heart and mind, and this he cannot do without first mortifying the flesh : no man can really keep under his thoughts and passions, who does not keep under his carnal appetites. For at the best, as the book of Wisdom saith, “the corruptible body presseth down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind.” What then can become of the mind when the parts of the flesh are suffered to rule over it? What but ruin and corruption? Just in proportion as the body is given up to intemperance or lust, are the faculties of the mind weakened and debased. This then must be done first: the flesh must be “subdued to the spirit;” when this is done, the spirit will be free to keep watch over itself, its own thoughts, and feelings, as they arise.

And so not only prayer is necessary, but watchfulness and self-discipline ; watchfulness to discover the enemy’s approach, and self-discipline to produce watchfulness. It was thus that John Baptist and the Lord Himself prepared to meet the enemy in the desert, it was thus that saints and Apostles prepared to meet him ; they knew, for their Master had taught them, that “this kind goeth not out but by prayer

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and fasting," and so they fasted and prayed ; and it is thus that every Christian must prepare himself for the battle. Besides prayer, there must be fasting for the subduing of the flesh, and above all there must be the partaking of Christ's body and blood in the Supper of the Lord that past sins may be forgiven and strength secured for future fights.

But to use his weapons skilfully, whether prayer or fasting, he must have time ; he must give himself time for the right and frequent use of them, else if he takes them up suddenly they will be like untried swords or untried armour. And what times could be better than those days and seasons which Christ's Church has always set apart for self-examination and study, and fasting and prayer ; a good use of this holy season of Lent, would train the Christian soldier for the battle, and then when the time came, he would be able to do his part in the fight.

And so he would prevail, for God would be with him. When the master of the house has made his peace with God, and prayed for His help, and then trusting in His help, has gone forth to do his own part, the work is done ; for God fighteth for His faithful soldiers. When the *Son of God* spake the word only, the evil

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spirits were cast out. And when the Spirit which dwelleth in us fighteth for us against the enemy, the victory is won; the strong man is bound, for a stronger than he is come upon him, and overcometh him: his armour wherein he trusted is taken from him, his goods are spoiled.

And so man's spiritual house is once for all the house of God. He who made man himself and placed him in it dwells with him there; his joy and his defence, his Friend in life; his Guide unto death; then after death the scene is changed, God who had dwelt with man on earth, receives him to Himself. Man in his turn becomes the guest of his Maker, he sits down at His table, in the many mansions of His house, "the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.

# Tracts for the Christian Seasons.

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## FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

### *The Penitent's state and provision.*

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PROPER LESSONS: *Morning*, Gen. xliii. ; *Evening*, Gen. xlv.  
EPISTLE, Gal. iv. 21. GOSPEL, St. John vi. 1.

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It happened to me once in the course of my ministry, that having been detained over night a short distance from home, I had to return to my parish somewhat early, in time for morning prayer. It was in winter, and during the night the snow had fallen heavily, but before I set out the clouds had cleared away, and a sharp bright frost had made the snow crisp and hard. At this early hour, when the sun was beginning to shew his first beams over the distant hills, and scarcely any one had as yet gone forth to his daily toil, the whole earth was wrapt in a mantle of the purest white. My way lay for the most part along a wide common, over which were scattered here and there the cottages of my parishioners, each with its white walls harmonizing with the landscape around. I was earlier than I need have been, and, as my church lay in

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a retired corner of the parish, the path which led to it was as yet untrodden, not a single footstep had soiled its exceeding whiteness. And yet I should be wrong in saying that white was the prevailing colour of the scene; for by the time I drew near home those brilliant red beams, which go before the first appearing of the sun itself, had begun to dart forth over the hills before me, and to cast their deep glow over the whole landscape. All was, as I have said, of the purest white, each little crystal of frozen snow glittered most gorgeously in the light; and yet it seemed as if over the whole were thrown a thin transparent veil of richest crimson; not taking away in the least from the purity of the white with which every thing was overspread, but yet subduing it, and making its own rosy hue predominant.

As I walked leisurely towards the church, my thoughts took some such course as this.

The pure, stainless path leading to the church before me, seemed to me a beautiful emblem of that path of innocence, along which the Holy Spirit would lead the Christian from the font of Holy Baptism to the gate of Heaven. It is a path along which the foot of wilful sin has never

<sup>1</sup> to defile its heavenly brightness. There

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may indeed be marks of human infirmity, shadows which the unevenness of the ground itself may cast, specks which, if you look close in, may be observed ; but there is no impress there of defiling, polluting sins, all to the very church door is pure and unsoiled. Yet, while you gaze upon the scene, you see that white is not the prevailing tint ; it has caught from the rising sun a red transparent glow. And this seemed very strikingly to resemble the case with the path of baptismal innocence. It is pure and undefiled through that Spirit, whose work it is ; but along its whole course shines brightly that Sun of righteousness, who has risen with healing on His wings ; all is bathed in the atoning blood of Christ, and from this its chief hue is caught ; pure is the life of innocence, but over all is sprinkled the blood of the cross, not hiding its purity, yet giving to it a colour which is not its own.

Then again, I thought, what would that same path be a few hours hence, when the world had been going on its way, passing to and fro on its daily business ? Where would be the bright unsullied purity, which now was so very lovely ? The snow would be trodden under foot, and the *mark of each* dark footstep seen, till by and bye

nothing would appear but a confused maze of tracks printed on mire and dirt. And is not this, I asked myself, a sad image of the penitent's path to the same heaven; the first estate of baptismal purity lost, each sin leaving its mark deeply impressed, and sometimes oft repeated sins doing away almost every trace of what it once was; so that now instead of what was so pure and beautiful, there remains but an unsightly way, through the mire and defilement of sins which cannot easily be shaken off?

But this reflection was so sad and grievous, that I rejoiced when the changing bell warned me I must hasten on my road, and as I went I tried to take comfort from the thought that the same Sun of righteousness still shone over this sin-stained way, and that as the day advanced It would send forth greater warmth, and enlivening power, and that, in the sinner's greatest need, It surely would never fail him.

I will now try, Christian reader, to carry on the thoughts thus suggested, more fully and more practically.

There is, we well know, and as people often say, though perhaps hardly understanding what *they* mean, but one way to heaven. "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth




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unto life," says our Lord; and again in another place, "I am the way:" and by this He means, that the Christian can only reach heaven through that all-sufficient sacrifice which He made upon the cross, that by Him alone we have access unto the Father; and besides, that what is required on our part is a life of holy obedience after the perfect pattern He has set; and that it is the Spirit which comes forth from Him, which must strengthen and conduct us on our road.

Yet this one narrow way is trodden by two different sets of travellers; these are, saints, that is, those who have never fallen from the grace of God, and penitents, that is, those who have fallen, and who now are seeking to regain what by their own fault they have lost.

And by saints, I mean not those whose every act has been perfect in God's sight, far from it; but whose one aim and object and desire has been to lead a holy and a blameless life; who have never wilfully sinned, so as to fall from the grace once given to them, and grieve the Spirit without whom they would be altogether vile; to whom sin has ever been "the accursed thing," which by the power of the new life received from Christ, when they "put on Christ,"



they have stedfastly abhorred and refused to consent to ; to whom He who loved them and gave Himself for them, has always been their Lord and Master ; while they have fled, as from a serpent's touch, the service of that wicked one, who would try to draw them from their true and rightful King.

Nor does it weaken the truth of what I say, that any one should doubt whether in this world of sin any such are to be found. God, who "hath not called us unto uncleanness but unto holiness," surely will preserve "His own" "unspotted from the world," though the world may not know there are such. Many a bright and fragrant flower springs up and blossoms and dies again, on which no eye ever rested except the eye of God. And so with His saints ; they are not such as the world delights to honour ; where man would be least likely to look for them, there most often are they to be found. 'That all around is defiled, is no proof that they do not exist ; if all the earth were stricken with a grievous pestilence, that would not prove there was no such thing as health. Thus is it with those unknown ones who tread the way to heaven from the font to the grave, growing in grace *as in years*, after the pattern, as well as by the

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strength, of Him, who was Himself a little child. Some may be born but soon to die, and others may live through long years with a bright light which, like the glowworm's, shines very brightly when we see it near, but which a careless passer by may overlook. Yet God will always have such; there shall be always such plying their happy way along the narrow road; Christ's holy pattern shall never lack some to copy it; till time shall be no more, there shall be "a few" found who shall behold His glory, and be "changed into the same image from glory to glory."

Yet however this may be, alas! we are too sure that of those who are now journeying along the heavenward way, very, very many are of the number of those whom the Church calls penitents.

These are they who have fallen into sin wilfully and of their own choice, not sins only of human infirmity, but sins which, if they had died in them, must have shut them out from all well-grounded hope of mercy. Thus their baptismal innocence is lost, they have soiled their former purity; but now by the grace of God they have been turned from their evil ways; the "God of penitents" has touched their hearts; they now

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mourn over their past misdeeds, and hate themselves for their little love to Him, who so dearly loved them; they have given themselves up altogether to a better life, and trusting in the boundless mercies which spared not an only Son, strive in every thought and word and deed to make the best amends they may for their former backslidings, by bearing their cross after their Saviour, and loving much, that so much may be forgiven.

And with these the way to heaven is more steep, and rugged, and full of peril, and toilsome far, than with those who have never fallen: narrow is the path of even God's saints; how narrow then must that of these be, how beset with dangers and difficulties that make the heart faint, while the hands hang down and the knees grow feeble; how wearying and crooked and full of stones of stumbling. These things must needs be so; else might men "continue in sin, that grace may abound," else sin were an unreal thing, a name, a shadow, which a breath may sweep away.

For the penitent has been wounded by sin; more or less deeply, as may be; but still, wherever temptation's arrow fixes in the soul, the soul is wounded, and like a wounded man, is

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sick and faint, and cannot strive as it could before. Besides, by having sinned, he has let in an enemy, which before dwelt outside, which he only knew by knowing what it was not: henceforth he has a more deadly fight to wage; his heart is like a candle newly blown out, which kindles readily as soon as it is brought near a flame.

And thus too Satan, the soul's Delilah, has found out where his weakness lies; he has shorn him of his strength, and knows how he may best take him prisoner. For the Blessed Spirit is the strength of the soul, and He cannot dwell where wilful sin is admitted: His temple in man's heart is defiled, and He cannot inhabit there, until it is made clean again. And this makes the penitent's path to heaven full of labour and sorrow. "All these things are against me," again and again is he tempted to cry; he thinks of what he once was, of what he might now have been; and yet to stop, he knows, is to be undone; to look back, to be lost for ever.

But there is another consideration far more important to the penitent than even these, full of sad truth as they may be: this is, the state of the penitent in the sight of God.

*For alas! he has fallen from grace: and what*

do we mean by this? not merely that the Holy Spirit has withdrawn Himself from an abode which sin has made unclean; but that sin has broken that blessed covenant of grace and mercy in Christ Jesus, to which baptism admitted him. At baptism he was made a member of Christ, and all the priceless blessings which Christ obtained for man, were made his; all that the Son of God by taking flesh won for His creatures, was offered him by God's free grace: but it was on conditions; a covenant means an agreement; and the penitent at his baptism made an agreement with God. This was, that all these precious gifts should be his, so long as he continued to live as a disciple of Christ should live. For this was the end of Christ's coming; not only that men should be forgiven, but that they should be cleansed inwardly. He "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." He "bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness." And this, when he was baptized, the penitent promised; on this condition he was forgiven, his *sin* washed away, and he "accepted in the *Beloved*." He was "buried with Him by bap-

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tism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so" he "also should walk in newness of life." But the penitent's wilful sin has broken that gracious bond; he has ceased to be Christ's, for he has indulged that "flesh, with the affections and lusts," which "they that are Christ's" must crucify; he has driven away that "Spirit of Christ," which if a man have not, "he is none of His."

Is he then henceforth altogether a castaway, without hope? God forbid. To think so were to limit that love which is infinite, to cut short His mercy who has declared that He is "not willing that any shall perish, but that all should come to repentance." What then would become of His gracious words, "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost," "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance?" Must all His loving parables of the lost sheep, the lost piece of money, the prodigal son, have no voice for Christians who have been once baptized? That were indeed to make the day of baptism but a foreshadowing of the day of judgment. No; the covenant, alas! is broken; the fallen sinner is not what he was before he fell; he has lost a most precious gift: *but the covenant may be renewed; the fallen*

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sinner may be restored; the precious gift may be regained. The sinner is no longer, for a time at least, a son; he has lost his right to that glorious title; but with the Canaanitish woman he may draw near to God and say, "Yes, Lord; yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs;" he need not starve; if he stoop low, he may be filled with these, and hereafter be raised up to feed on "the children's bread."

We have heard, brother, the Church speaking, in the Gospel of to-day, of Christ's feeding five thousand hungering creatures; and by this we are taught how the bread of life, food for the soul, is still dispensed by those who minister in Christ's name, to those who are hungering for that better "meat which endureth unto everlasting life." And now, at this solemn season, when our thoughts are mainly of repentance, we are led to speak and think of the food of penitents, of the provision which the Church, as she who dispenses the good things which Christ has stored up, makes for her children who have fallen.

Once, indeed, she drew a broad line between those who had fallen and those who had not: in the days when the Church was freshest from the *Apostles'* teaching, and the sound of what they



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delivered still rang in her ears, she used to dole out her measures of spiritual food very differently for saints and penitents. Then even the very House of God in which they met, reminded penitents whence they had fallen ; they stood by themselves at the door to worship, the farther off the more grievous their sins ; and they might not draw near to the holy place, with those who had kept their baptismal innocence. And if these things are not so now, can we think, dear brother, that “the truth as it is in Jesus” has changed as years have rolled by ? Nay, if discipline has grown slack, the truth is still the same.

Thus therefore, we must believe, does our Church teach us. If there be no outward distinction now, the more would she have us remember the inward difference ; if saints and penitents are to the bodily eye alike, the more plainly does she desire they shall be separated to the eye of conscience. Never must we forget this ; if saints and penitents meet alike when the Church distributes to all their gifts of daily bread, the greater reason is there why there should be an inward sense of difference ; if the penitent mingles with the saint, even at the holiest of the Church’s ordinances, the more need is there that he should in secret smite

upon his breast and cry within himself, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

But what, let us now think, is that food which the Church is commissioned to give to those who have fallen from the grace of baptism.

Three times did St. Peter fall, three times by tender words did Christ restore him, three times did Christ speak words of love, by which they that are penitent may be restored also. He gave His Church a commission which is most "comfortable" to the sinner; for it shews that Christ provided for those who should fall from grace, and it is a full provision. "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them." For the penitent who has fallen from grace and desires to return to his "first works," the Church bears from her Lord that gracious food which He gave her in the power to absolve from sin. Twice every day in daily prayer, most solemnly too, when kneeling before the holy table, and again, more awfully still, when he is sick and near to death, does the Church come to the sinner, and declare that her Lord and Master has sent her to remit his sins. But the penitent's heart must be unlocked, else this treasure will be lost. "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it," says the Lord, and grace must do

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this for him, else the food will be wasted. If he repent sincerely, each time he seeks the Church's absolution, will his guilt in God's sight be lessened, his stains more fully cleansed. And that he may really repent, the Church sends him to her minister and his pastor, bidding him open to him his grief, and ask for counsel, and words of comfort and guidance. In this way she trusts that the gifts, with which she is entrusted, will not be thrown away; that the words she speaks for her Lord on earth, will be ratified by her Lord in heaven.

But she has other food beside this, the food of the Holy Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood. I do not speak, you see, brother, of prayer; for of this you know well, that without prayer there can be no repentance; it would be idle to talk of a penitent's seeking to be restored, who did not pray. Every earnest prayer that comes from the heart, offered to God through Christ, shall surely be accepted as a step on his heavenward road.

The Holy Communion, then, is to the penitent a most precious boon; if it is a partaking of Christ to the saint, can it be less to the sinner? if His Body makes clean the body, and His precious Blood washes the soul of the one, must *it not of the other?* Sin indeed separates a man from his God: if it were not so, once to partake

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of this heavenly feast would restore the penitent to whence he had fallen. But his sins cannot be shaken off by a word: the more he repents and prays, and seeks absolution, the more blessed shall each Communion be to him; each time he comes to it shall his wounds be more healed, the scars of sin more entirely done away. In God's good time, if he by His grace persevere, all that defiled shall be thoroughly cleansed, his robes shall be as clean and white as when they first were given him. The Bible tells us but of two regenerations, "the washing of regeneration" at Holy Baptism, "the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory," that is, at the day of judgment, when every stain of weakness and ignorance, as well as repented wilfulness, shall be done away. Then to all shall white robes be given, whiter than even of Holy Baptism, "exceeding white," "so as no fuller on earth can white them;" then shall saints and penitents meet together, and not even angels shall tell the difference; the "strait gate" shall be opened at their coming, and, as they enter in, the cry shall be heard, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb."

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.

# Tracts for the Christian Seasons.

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## FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

*The Cross the penitent's hope.*

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PROPER LESSONS: *Morning*, Exodus iii.; *Evening*, Exodus v.

EPISTLE, Heb. ix. 11. GOSPEL, St. John viii. 46.

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IF you had ever chanced, reader, to go into the neat little church of Barton at the hour of daily prayer, you would have been almost sure to see in the foremost rank of the little band of worshippers there, a man, whose grey hairs and bowed back spoke of many years or many trials. Those church-doors are seldom open, that old James is not one of the few there gathered together. And his is no formal attendance. I wish you could be there, as I have been, and see how surely his heart is present, not his body only.

It has been a sight that has touched me more than I can tell, to watch that old man on his knees, when the minister and people have been confessing their sins to God, and see his aged face meekly raised towards the eastern sky, and the tear, it may be, glistening in his eye, as he has uttered in deep devotion those words of earnest supplication, "Spare Thou them, O

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God, which confess their faults, restore them that are penitent:" or when, on days, he has taken up from the clerk the solemn invocation, "O Lamb of God, takest away the sins of the world," as might perceive his lips quiver, and his fill, as the response has gone up from his "Have mercy upon us."

And yet old James is but a poor, ill man, ill-taught I mean, in worldly learning just as other cottagers are. I cannot tell much of his early history; his parents I know, when he was young, and he went to struggle with the world, as best he could. Times were hard, I have heard him say he was just coming to man's estate, and discontented with the station to which his father had called him, he joined a party of young men, who were unwisely leaving their homes and all that was dear to them, to try their fortunes, as they said, in the world. As a soldier he went to foreign lands, where he did much service, and alas! much wickedness. A military camp is a bad school, and he, thoughtful of a social disposition, found it so indeed. When the war was over, he came to his native place with his wife and an only child, a son

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settled down here, where his pension was just enough to keep him from the reach of want. For himself, his life, though not long in years, had been long in toil and hardship, and now, an old man before his days had scarcely reached their prime, he could help but little towards the maintenance of his family.

It was not until several years after he had returned, that I first knew him, when his health was still further broken, and heavy trials had well-nigh taken away the little strength which at first remained to him. His wife did not live long after their return : continued hardships had told upon a constitution never strong, and she soon left him alone in his lowly cottage. Yes, alone, for before she herself was borne to her last home on earth, she had closed the eyes of their little son. They had both dearly loved him, for he was a child whom all that saw must have loved, and he was their only child. And this was more than her sickly frame could bear, and before the daisies had blossomed on his grave, she slept by his side. Poor James strove hardly against the tide of sorrow ; his neighbours used to say that his turn would soon come ; but it was not so ; he bent before the storm, and it passed over him, and by degrees he raised his

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head again, and became what he was before. But was he what he was before? In bodily look he was, but within he was changed, he was other than before. The Lord's bow from whence had flown that arrow which laid low those most dear to him, had sent forth another arrow, that of real conviction of sin, and this fixed itself deeply in his heart. I do not mean that you should think, that old James had been leading a wicked life up to these last afflictions; far from it. All who knew him would bear their ready witness to his steady and correct life. They would tell you how kind and friendly a neighbour he was, how upright and conscientious in all his dealings, how glad to say a good word for any one, and how regularly he was to be seen at God's House of prayer. But, as I have said, the old man had in his early days led a careless and wicked life: he had again and again broken God's holy laws, he had taken God's name in vain, loved idle and unholy talk, lived without prayer, and not restrained those fleshly lusts, which they who indulge cannot inherit the kingdom of God. His parents dying when he was young, he had been left much to himself, and thus had fallen in with ungodly companions, who had taught him much



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harm, and unhappily he had no kind friend at hand to warn him of his danger, and direct him in better paths. And a soldier's life was a bad soil for these seeds of ill, so early sown, to fall in ; they sprang up, as might be expected, and bare much evil fruit. But yet all in his heart was not utterly corrupt ; James's parents had seen their little one born again in holy baptism, before they were taken from him, and the good seed of grace was not altogether choked by the thorns and weeds of sin. The Blessed Spirit still strove within him ; often did it whisper in the ear of his conscience, that his careless, ungodly life was full of peril ; that they who sowed to the flesh should of the flesh surely reap corruption. And this gracious voice he did not entirely reject. More than once did he pray earnestly for help against his evil habits, and make resolutions of amendment : but wicked companions were too much for him, and in the hour of trial he loved the world better than he did God. Still, a soldier's life, if it help to make a man careless of religion, makes a man think too. Death will make the most giddy stop and consider his doings ; and death on the field of battle, speaks loudly to the sinner. *This old James* had found true : he had him-

pression on him ; slowly and silently, but was that Holy Spirit, who had once been him, making His way again into a heart thoroughly His. Sinful habits indeed were strong, and many a hard struggle was to break through them, and those who joined with him in sin, had still an influence which he could not shake off.

But when he married, and came home to land, and settled down at Barton, sincere and were his resolutions for the future, and his prayers that he might have power to them. And no one, as we have seen, could otherwise, than that his life was most exemplary. A kind husband, a most tender father

respectable steady life? We will answer this by going on with the old man's history.

When he settled down in his little cottage, he really felt sorry for all his misdoings: if he had to begin life again, he would have tried, I am sure, to avoid all that had been to him an occasion of falling. His life was most regular; he never left his morning or evening prayers unsaid; was almost always in his place at church on Sundays, and had thoughts of coming to the Holy Communion. But all this time the Holy Spirit was working within him a far greater work than this. His leisure time gave him much opportunity for reading, and what is better, for thinking of what he read; and God's blessed Book was his frequent companion. And here he read startling things of sin, which made him ponder deeply, and these his own weak health and continued ailments helped to bring home to him. Often has his Bible lain open before him, where those fearful words of St. Paul are written, "If we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." And this passage very naturally coupled itself with

another, a few chapters earlier in the same Epistle, "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance:" and he knew, that every baptized person has been a partaker of the Holy Ghost, that he himself had been. This brought into his mind the merciful Saviour's words about the sin against the Holy Ghost, and what St. John says of the "sin unto death," which he cannot exhort others to pray for. Then he compared this with what Holy Scripture says of the Christian's high calling; that he is bidden, "be holy as God is holy;" that he is actually a new creature in Christ Jesus, and so, as being born of the incorruptible seed, "sinneth not." And these things, at any rate, made the old man think and feel that sin to a baptized Christian is a very fearful thing indeed, very different from what it would be to a heathen who has never been baptized. Thus, reader, did God cause to grow within him the seed of grace, which past sins had well-nigh choked; first the blade, then the ear; it remained still that the full corn in the ear should be perfected.

This the gracious Spirit did, by means of those heavy afflictions, of which I have already told you. First, old James's son had been taken away in the fresh bloom of childhood, by one of those short illnesses, by which the sweetest powers are sometimes cut down. Oh ! what a thrilling voice had this to the old man's heart. Pure and undefiled was this little one of Christ : at this, while it filled the cup of comfort, poured it to the dregs the cup of sorrow. He doubted not their dear child should have a high place hereafter, in the kingdom of its Saviour ; but what if he himself were shut out, if he should never see that little one in glory ? And how dared he hope ? What a contrast his unholy youth and early manhood with the purity of that sweet innocent ! Could unspotted saints, and sinners who had fallen, be together in the world to come ? These were fearful thoughts, and they rung the old man's heart. And when his wife began to sicken and droop, how was the stream of that heart's anguish swollen ! He had no other consolation ; he thought about her future lot, and of that of his departed child ; he could not comfort himself by knowing, that she had passed through life without gathering a stain of sin ; he hoped and trusted she was penitent ; but is

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penitence, at the best, he asked himself, the same as abiding grace? And how much had his own example to do with her sins? What harm had he not done her by his past carelessness? How much good had he not left undone, which his own strict and holy pattern might have wrought? And when the grave closed over her, and the last tears were shed over her earthly tabernacle, that wounded heart seemed about to be rent asunder. But, no, the Good Samaritan was near; the oil and wine were poured within: the wound of sorrow for the departed became a wound of sorrow for past sin, and for this to be kept open is the surest mark of health.

Henceforth old James was an altered man. You may ask me, how could that be? The change, brother, was chiefly inward, which God alone could see. His neighbours perhaps might have remarked an alteration, even outwardly. He might perhaps have looked more sad, and his eyes have been more often bent to the ground than before. But these things were only faint tokens of the change within. If indeed you had asked him, if he felt more sad, he would have told you that he never knew real happiness until now. He had lost, it is true, those who were dearer to him than his life, but those losses

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had found for him a Friend, in finding whom he had found again those he had lost and his own self too. Before his last afflictions his heart had still been hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. He had not duly felt how hateful to God his past life was, what base ingratitude he had shewn to his kind and loving Saviour. He had thought repentance to be too easy a work; that a better life will in some way undo the past. But now, by the infinite grace of God, he had learnt to know his state more truly; he had been taught by his Father's chastisements, to measure himself by the cross of Christ; from it he learnt what sin really is, what his own sin had been. His Saviour's voice had sounded in his ears from the bed of death and the graves of those who were so dear to him, and asked him whether sin must not indeed be very terrible, for which nothing less than the bloody sweat and the bitter cross could atone. And this cross while it laid bare to him the depths of his own uncleanness, shewed itself also to him as his only cure. That blood while it dyed the unrepentant sinner's guilt a deeper dye, would, he learnt, wash clean the stains of all who came in penitence. Henceforth, then, the cross of Christ became to him each day more

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precious; more and more precious, till he felt it to be all in all. Nothing else had he to glory in, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. He would ask himself, what he would have been without it; with it, what might he not hope to be. The blood of the cross alone, he knew, had power to cleanse his sins, and He it was who hung thereon, he felt, who had drawn him unto Him, drawn him from the deep of his past sinfulness. The cross indeed was his hope, but it was his pattern also. He pondered well his Saviour's words, "If a man take not up his cross and follow Me, he cannot be My disciple;" and how could he ever hope to be His disciple, sinner as he had been, except he bore his cross after his Saviour. He knew that they who could partake of the rich blessings the cross has won, must be partakers of the spirit the cross teaches. This therefore was his aim. He desired to be filled with a measure of that infinite love, which the cross displayed, that tenderness, and self-denial, and hatred of sin. The cross was his treasure, and where the treasure is, there will the heart be also. His heart was in the cross, and he strove that the cross might be in his heart. It was to him, like the wood thrown into the bitter waters



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Marah; it turned the bitterness of sin into purity of holiness, as well as the sweetness Christian hope.

Perhaps it might interest you, were I to tell upon some of those marks of a deep, reaching, inward change, which struck me most in the daily life of this sincere penitent. Had I watched him then as I did, you would, I think, have noticed more of tenderness and gentleness in all he said and did, though before he was so kind and courteous. He seemed to be a true one, who has received a precious gift, and whose heart so overflows with thankfulness, that he is constrained to go and make others receive it with him. I could never see him, without his recalling to my mind the woman who had been a sinner, for like her, he was full of love, that so much might be given. Those who, like himself, had fallen into sin, he seemed to think the especial objects of his love. It was as if he had been brought out of the fearful fellowship of sin with them, and that he longed to bring them into the blessed fellowship of grace. If there were any young men in the village, whose feet were inclined towards the ways of unholiness, he used, I always thought, to consider them his peculiar charge.

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How anxiously would he watch for an opportunity to speak a word in due season, a tender, yet firm and decided word, begging them, for their own sakes, and for the love of Christ, to leave off their evil beginnings, and follow their Lord and Saviour. And I have known his kind remonstrances, for I can hardly call them reproofs, steady many a wavering step, and call back more than one, who had just set out on the broad road.

But, whilst his heart was thus intent on winning back to Christ's fold sheep which had gone astray, never did he forget true Christian humility. The cross had taught him this too forcibly to be easily forgotten. It was his hatred of sin, and consciousness of his own sin, that made him thus deeply anxious for the eternal good of others. It was, as feeling that he himself had been plucked out of the fire, that he was always stretching forth his hand to help to save others.

Little children too he loved with more than common affection. His Bible had taught him to look on them, as especially dear to his Saviour, and the thought of their purity, compared with his own sin-stained soul, made him regard them with reverence. He would sometimes tempt them to his cottage, and there talk

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hem of that good Saviour, who said, "Suffer little children to come unto Me;" and then would teach them lessons of self-denial, to k more of their brothers and sisters and panions than themselves, and he always made st's love to them the ground of their doing

Nor did he himself neglect these lessons h he thought should be taught so early. A man cannot deny himself as a rich man can; often and often have the good angels who present in God's House, when His people gathered there, seen a sixpence fall from the man's hand into the alms-dish, to spare h, the Sunday meal has been a slice of d, and water from the well. He had long d his Church, but now it became his home, poor man's home he used to call it; the se where sinners meet the sinner's Friend. bell was to him his Saviour's voice, which , "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are y-laden, and I will give you rest," and sel- did he refuse its invitation.

Ve need not go, reader, into his secret nber and see him there; One who seeth in et is there, and what is done there is written His book. To be alone, to him was to be God. Then surely were to be heard those

was about to draw nigh to the Holy Sac  
of Christ's Body and Blood. Then, the  
touching lines,

"It is my Maker—dare I stay ?  
My Saviour—dare I turn away ?"

would describe somewhat the deep strivi  
the old man's spirit, as he slowly and rev  
approached the altar.

Now, reader, you have read in the Ep  
to-day that the blood of Christ, who, throu  
Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without s  
God, has power to purge our conscience from  
works to serve the living God ; it speaks  
cross of Christ. Have you then been a  
as the old man of whom I have spoken ?  
learn from him the power of that cross t  
you let your hope be in it as his was the

